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THE

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REV. JOHN WESLEY.

VOLUME X.

CONTAINING,

THIRTY-SEVEN SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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SERMON LXXXIV.

ON DISSIPATION.

1 Corinthians VII. 35.

"*This I speak—that ye may attend upon the* Lord *without Distraction.*"

1. ALMOST in every part of our nation, more especially in the large and populous towns, we hear a general complaint among sensible persons, of the still increasing *Dissipation.* It is observed to diffuse itself more and more in the court, the city, and the country. From the continual mention which is made of this, and the continual declamations against it, one would naturally imagine that a word so commonly used was perfectly understood. Yet it may be doubted whether it be or not. Nay, we may very safely affirm, that few of those who frequently use the term, understand what it means. One reason of this is, that altho' the thing has been long among us, especially since the time of King Charles the Second, (one of the most dissipated mortals that ever breathed,) yet the word is not of long standing. It was hardly heard of fifty years ago; and not much before the present reign. So lately has it been imported: and yet it is so in every one's mouth, that it is already worn threadbare, being one of the cant words of the day.

2. Another reason why it is so little understood may be, that among the numberless writers that swarm about us,

there is not one, (at least, whom I have seen) that has published so much as a six-penny pamphlet concerning it. We have, indeed, one short essay upon the subject: but exceeding few have seen it, as it stands in the midst of a volume of Essays, the author of which is little known in the world. And even this is so far from going to the bottom of the subject, that it only slightly glances over it; and does not so much as give us one definition of *Dissipation*, (which I looked narrowly for,) from the beginning to the end.

3. We are accustomed to speak of Dissipation, as having respect chiefly, if not wholly, to the outward behaviour; to the manner of life. But it is within, before it appears without: it is in the heart, before it is seen in the outward conversation. There must be a dissipated spirit, before there is a dissipated manner of life. But what is Dissipation of Spirit? This is the first and the grand enquiry.

4. God created all things for himself; more especially all intelligent spirits. (And indeed it seems that intelligence, in some kind or degree, is inseparable from spiritual beings: that intelligence is as essential to spirits, as extension is to matter.) He made those more directly for himself, to know, love, and enjoy him. As the sun is the centre of the Solar System, so (as far as we may compare material things with spiritual) we need not scruple to affirm, that God is the centre of spirits. And as long as they are united to him, created spirits are at rest: they are at rest so long, and no longer, as they "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

5. This expression of the Apostle, (not to encumber ourselves at present with the particular occasion of his speaking it,) is exceeding peculiar: πρὸς το ευπροσεδρον τῶ Κυριῶ. The word which we render *attend upon*, literally means, sitting in a good posture for hearing. And therein St.. Paul undoubtedly alluded to Mary sitting at the Master's feet, Luke x. 39. Mean time, Martha was *cumbered* with much serving, was *distracted, dissipated:* περιεσπατο·

It is the very expression from whence St. Paul takes the word which we render, *without distraction.*

6. And even as much serving dissipated the thoughts of Martha, and distracted her from attending to her Lord's words, so a thousand things which daily occur, are apt to dissipate our thoughts, and distract us from attending to his voice, who is continually speaking to our hearts: I mean, to all that listen to his voice. We are encompassed on all sides with persons and things that tend to draw us from our centre. Indeed, every creature, if we are not continually on our guard, will draw us from our Creator. The whole visible world, all we see, hear, or touch, all the objects either of our senses or understanding, have a tendency to dissipate our thoughts from the invisible world, and to distract our minds from attending to him, who is both the Author and End of our Being.

7. This is the more easily done, because we are all, by nature, αθεοι, *Atheists in the world:* and that in so high a degree, that it requires no less than Almighty Power to counteract that tendency to dissipation, which is in every human spirit, and restore the capacity of attending to God, and fixing itself on him. For this cannot be done, till we are new creatures, till we are created anew in Christ Jesus, till the same power which made the world, make us a "clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us."

8. But who is he that is thus renewed? He that believeth in the Name of the Son of God. He alone that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus "born of God." It is by this faith alone, that he is "created anew in or through Christ Jesus," that he is restored to the image of God, wherein he was created, and again centered in God, or, as the Apostle expresses it, "joined to the Lord in one spirit." Yet even then the believer may find in himself, the remains of that *carnal mind,* that natural tendency to rest in created good, to acquiesce in visible things, which, without continual care, will press down his soul, and draw him from his Creator. Herein the world, the men that know not God, will never fail to join; at some times, with

design, and at other times, perhaps without design: for their very spirit is infectious, and insensibly changes our's into its own likeness. And we may be well assured, the prince of this world, the devil, will assist them with all his might. He will labour with all his strength, and what is far more dangerous, with all his subtilty, if, by any means, he may draw us away from our *simplicity towards Christ;* from our simple adherence to him, from our union with him, through whom we are also united in one spirit to the Father.

9. But nothing is more certain than this, that though he may tempt the strongest believer, to give up his *simplicity toward Christ*, and scatter his thoughts and desires among worldly objects; yet he cannot force even the weakest; for the grace of God is still sufficient for him. The same grace which at first united him to God, is able to continue that happy union, in spite of all the rage, strength, and subtilty of the enemy. God has never left himself without witness, that he has power to deliver them that trust in him, as out of every temptation that can assault them, so out of this, in particular. He has still a little flock, who do, in fact, "attend upon him without distraction:" who, cleaving to him with full purpose, are not dissipated from him, no, not for a moment: but "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks."

10. But so far as any one yields to this temptation, so far he is *dissipated.* The original word properly signifies to *dispersse* or *scatter.* So the sun dissipates, that is, scatters the clouds; the wind dissipates, or scatters the dust. And by an easy metaphor, our thoughts are said to be dissipated, when they are irregularly scattered up and down. In like manner, our desires are dissipated, when they are unhinged from God, their proper centre, and scattered to and fro among the poor, perishing, unsatisfying things of the world. And, indeed, it may be said of every man that is a stranger to the grace of God, that all his passions are dissipated,

"Scattered o'er all the earth abroad,
Immeasurably far from God."

11. *Distraction*, in St. Paul's sense, is nearly allied to, or rather the same with Dissipation: consequently, to attend upon the Lord *without distraction*, is the same as to attend upon the Lord *without dissipation*. But whenever the mind is unhinged from God, it is so far dissipated or distracted. Dissipation then in general may be defined, The uncentring the soul from God. And whatever uncentres the mind from God does properly dissipate us.

12. Hence we may easily learn, what is the proper, direct meaning of that common expression, a *dissipated man*. He is a man that is separated from God, that is disunited from his centre, whether this be occasioned by hurry of business, by seeking honour or preferment, or by fondness for diversions, for silly pleasures so called, or for any trifle under the sun. The vulgar, it is true, commonly confine this character to those who are violently attached to women, gaming, drinking; to dancing, balls, races, or the poor, childish diversion of "running foxes and hares out of breath." But it equally belongs to the serious fool who forgets God, by a close attention to any worldly employment, suppose it were of the most elegant, or of the most important kind. A man may be as much dissipated from God, by the study of the Mathematics or Astronomy, as by fondness for cards or hounds. Whoever is habitually inattentive to the Presence and Will of his Creator, he is a *dissipated* man.

13. Hence we may likewise learn, That a *dissipated life* is not barely that of a powdered beau, of a petit-maître, a gamester, a woman-hunter, a play-house hunter, a fox-hunter, or a shatterbrain of any kind; but the life of an honourable Statesman, a Gentleman, or a Merchant, that is *without God in the world*. Agreeably to this, a *dissipated age*, (such as is the present, perhaps beyond all that ever were, at least, that are recorded in history) is an age wherein God is generally forgotten. And *a dissipated nation*, (such as England is at present in a superlative degree,) is a nation, a vast majority of which have not God "in all their thoughts."

14. A plain consequence of these observations is, (what some may esteem a paradox,) That *Dissipation*, in the full, general meaning of the word, is the very same thing with *Ungodliness*. The name is new; but the thing is, undoubtedly almost as old as the Creation. And this is, at present, the peculiar glory of England, wherein it is not equalled by any nation under heaven. We, therefore, speak an unquestionable truth when we say, There is not on the face of the earth, another nation, (at least that we ever heard of,) so perfectly *dissipated* and *ungodly;* not only so totally without God in the world, but so openly setting him at defiance. There never was an *age* that we read of in history, since Julius Cæsar, since Noah, since Adam, wherein Dissipation or Ungodliness did so generally prevail, both among high and low, rich and poor.

15. But still, blessed be God!

> "All are not lost; there be who faith
> Prefer, and piety to God!"

There are some, I trust more than *seven thousand*, yea, or ten times that number in England, *who have not* yet *bowed* either *their knee* or their heart, to the god of this world; who cleaving close to the God of heaven, are not borne away by the flood, by the general, the almost universal torrent of *Dissipation* or Ungodliness. They are not of the mind of gentle Crispus,

> *Qui nunquam direxit brachia contra Torrentem:*

"Who never attempted to swim against the stream." They dare swim against the stream. Each of them can truly say,

> *Non me, qui cætera vincit*
> *Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.*

If they cannot turn the tide back, they can, at least, bear an open testimony against it. They are, therefore, free from the blood of their ungodly countrymen: it must be upon their own head.

16. But by what means may we avoid the being carried

away by the overflowing stream of *Dissipation?* It is not difficult for those who believe the Scripture, to give an answer to this question. Now I really believe the Bible to be the Word of God: and on that supposition I answer, The radical cure of all dissipation, is the "faith that worketh by love." If, therefore, you would be free from this evil disease, first, "continue steadfast in the faith;" in that *faith* which brings "the Spirit of adoption, crying in your heart, Abba, Father;" whereby you are enabled to testify, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." By this faith you "see him that is invisible, and set the Lord always before you." Next, "building yourselves up in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life." And as long as you walk by this rule, you will be superior to all dissipation.

17. How exactly does this agree, (though there is a difference in the expression,) with that observation of pious Kempis: "Simplicity and purity are the two wings, which lift the soul up to heaven. Simplicity is in the intention, purity in the affection." For what is this but (in the Apostle's language) simple *faith working by love?* By that simplicity you always see God, and by purity you love him. What is it, but having, (as one of the ancients speaks,) "the loving eye of the soul fixed upon God?" And as long as your soul is in this posture, dissipation can have no place.

18. It is with great judgment, therefore, that the great and good Bishop Taylor, in his "Rules of Holy Living and Dying," (of whom Bishop Warburton, a person not very prone to commend, used to say, "I have no conception of a greater genius on earth, than Dr. Jeremiah Taylor,") premises to all his other rules, those concerning purity of intention. And has he not the authority of our Lord himself so to do? who lays it down as an universal maxim, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Singly aim at God: in every step thou

takest, eye him alone. Pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving God. Then shall thy soul be full of light; full of the light of the glory of God, of his glorious love, shining upon thee from *the face of Jesus Christ.*

19. Can any thing be a greater help to universal holiness, than the continually seeing the Light of his Glory? It is no wonder then, that so many wise and good men have recommended, to all who desire to be truly religious, the exercise of the Presence of God. But in doing this, some of those holy men seem to have fallen into one mistake: (particularly, an excellent Writer of our own country, in his letters concerning "The Spirit of Prayer:") They put men, wholly unawakened, unconvinced of sin, upon this exercise, at their very entrance into religion: whereas this certainly should not be the first, but rather one of the last things. They should begin with repentance, the knowledge of themselves, of their sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness. They should be instructed next, to seek peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then let them be taught to retain what they have received, to "walk in the light of his countenance;" yea, to walk "in the light as he is in the light," without any darkness at all, till "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth *them* from all sin."

20. It was from a full conviction of the absolute necessity there is, of a Christian's setting the Lord always before him, that a set of young gentlemen in Oxford, who, many years ago, used to spend most of their evenings together, in order to assist each other in working out their salvation, placed that question first, in their scheme of daily self-examination, "Have I been *simple* and *recollected* in all I said or did? Have I been *simple?* That is, setting the Lord always before me, and doing every thing with a single view of pleasing him? *Recollected*, that is, quickly gathering in my scattered thoughts, recovering my simplicity, if I had been in any wise drawn from it, by men or devils, or my own evil heart? By this mean they were preserved from dissipation, and were enabled, each of them to say,

"By the grace of God, *this one thing I do*, (at least, it is my constant aim,) I see God: I love God: I serve God: I glorify him with my body and with my spirit."

21. The same thing seems to be intended by two uncommon words, which are frequently found in the writings of those pious men, who are usually styled Mystics. I mean, *Introversion*, and *Extroversion*. "Examine yourselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, and in them to the Christians of all ages, "Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" That is, unbelievers, unable to bear the touchstone of God's Word. Now the attending to the Voice of Christ within you, is what they term *Introversion*. The turning the eye of the mind from him to outward things, they call *Extroversion*. By this your thoughts wander from God, and you are properly dissipated: whereas by introversion, you may be always sensible of his loving Presence. You continually hearken to whatever it pleases your Lord to say to your heart. And if you continually listen to his inward voice, you will be kept from all dissipation.

22. We may, lastly, learn hence, what judgment to form of what is frequently urged in favour of the English nation, and of the present age, namely, that in other respects England stands on a level with other nations, and the present age stands upon a level with any of the preceding. Only it is allowed we are more *dissipated* than our neighbours, and this age is more dissipated than the preceding ages. Nay, if this is allowed, all is allowed. It is allowed that this nation is worse than any of the neighbouring nations: and that this age is worse, essentially worse, than any of the preceding ages. For as Dissipation or Ungodliness is the parent of all sin, of all unrighteousness; of unmercifulness, injustice, fraud, perfidy; of every possible evil temper, evil word, or evil action; so it, in effect, comprizes them all. Whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of evil report, whatsoever things are unholy: if there be any vice, all these are included in Ungodliness, usually termed Dissipation. Let not, therefore,

any lover of virtue and truth say one word in favour of this monster: let no lover of mankind once open his mouth to extenuate the guilt of it. Abhor it as you would abhor the devil, whose offspring and likeness it is. Abhor it, as you would abhor the extinction of all virtue, and the universal prevalence of an earthly, sensual, devilish spirit; and flee from it as you would flee (if you saw it open before you) *from the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

SERMON LXXXV.

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD.

JAMES IV. 4.

"*Ye Adulterers and Adulteresses, know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with* GOD? *Whosoever, therefore, desireth to be a Friend of the World, is an Enemy of* GOD."

1. THERE is a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which has often been supposed to be of the same import with this: "Be not conformed to this world," ch. xii. 2. But it has little or no relation to it; it speaks of quite another thing. Indeed the supposed resemblance arises merely from the use of the word *World* in both places. This naturally leads us to think, that St. Paul means by *conformity to the world*, the same which St. James means by *friendship with the world:* whereas they are entirely different things, as the words are quite different in the original; (for St. Paul's word is αιων; St. James's is κοσμος.) However, the words of St. Paul contain an important direction to the children of God. As if he had said, Be not conformed to either the wisdom, or the spirit, or the fashions *of the age:* of either the unconverted Jews, or the Heathens, among whom ye live. You are called to shew, by the whole tenor of your life and conversation, that you are "renewed in the spirit of your mind, after the

image of him that created you;" and that your rule is not the example or will of man, but "the good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God."

2. But it is not strange, that St. James's caution against *Friendship with the World* should be so little understood, even among Christians. For I have not been able to learn that any author, ancient or modern, has written upon the subject: no, not (so far as I have observed) for sixteen or seventeen hundred years. Even that excellent writer, Mr. Law, who has treated so well many other subjects, has not, in all his practical treatises, written one chapter upon it. No, nor said one word, that I remember, or given one caution against it. I never heard one sermon preached upon it, either before the University or elsewhere. I never was in any company, where the conversation turned explicitly upon it, even for one hour.

3. Yet are there very few subjects of so deep importance; few that so nearly concern the very essence of Religion, the Life of God in the soul, the continuance and increase, or the decay, yea, extinction of it. From the want of instruction in this respect, the most melancholy consequences have followed. These, indeed, have not affected those who were still dead in trespasses and sins; but they have fallen heavy upon many of those who were truly alive to God. They have affected many of those called *Methodists* in particular, perhaps more than any other people. For want of understanding this advice of the Apostle, (I hope rather than from any contempt of it,) many among them are sick, spiritually sick, and many sleep, who were once thoroughly awakened. And it is well if they awake any more till their souls are required of them. It has appeared difficult to me, to account for what I have frequently observed: many who were once greatly alive to God, whose conversation was in heaven, who had set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth: though they walked in all the ordinances of God, though they still abounded in good works, and abstained from all known sin, yea, and from the appearance of evil; yet they

gradually and insensibly decayed, (like Jonah's gourd, when the worm ate the root of it,) insomuch, that they are less alive to God now, than they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. But it is easily accounted for, if we observe, that as they increased in goods, they increased in *friendship with the world;* which, indeed, must always be the case, unless the mighty power of God interpose. But in the same proportion as they increased in this, the life of God in their soul decreased.

4. Is it strange that it should decrease, if those words are really found in the Oracles of God, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" What is the meaning of these words? Let us seriously consider. And may God open the eyes of our understanding, that in spite of all the mist wherewith the wisdom of the world would cover us, we may discern, what is the good and acceptable will of God.

5. Let us first consider, What it is which the Apostle here means by *the World.* He does not here refer to this outward frame of things, termed in Scripture, heaven and earth; but to the inhabitants of the earth, the children of men: or at least the greater part of them. But what part? This is fully determined both by our Lord himself, and by his beloved Disciple. First, by our Lord himself. His words are, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me," John xv. 18, &c. You see here *the world* is placed on one side, and *those who are not of the world* on the other. They whom God has "chosen out of the world," namely, by "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," are set in direct opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen.

Yet again, "Those who know not him that sent me," saith our Lord, who know not God, they are *the world.*

6. Equally express are the words of the beloved Disciple: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you: we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 13. As if he had said, "You must not expect any should love you, but those that have "passed from death unto life." It follows, Those that are not passed from death unto life, that are not alive to God, are *the world.* The same we may learn from those words in the fifth chapter, ver. 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Here *the world* plainly means, those that are not of God, and who, consequently, *lie in the wicked one.*

7. Those, on the contrary, *are of God*, who love God, or, at least, "fear him, and keep his commandments." This is the lowest character of those that "are of God," who are not properly sons, but servants: who "depart from evil, and study to do good, and walk in all his ordinances, because they have the fear of God in their heart, and a sincere desire to please him. Fix in your heart, this plain meaning of the terms *the world*, those who do not thus fear God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: it means neither more nor less than this.

8. But, understanding the term in this sense, what kind of friendship may we have with *the world?* We may, we ought to love them as ourselves, (for they also are included in the word *neighbour*,) to bear them real good-will; to desire their happiness as sincerely as we desire the happiness of our own souls: yea, we are in a sense to honour them, (seeing we are directed by the Apostle to "honour all men,") as the creatures of God; nay, as immortal spirits, who are capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying him to all eternity. We are to honour them, as redeemed by his Blood, who "tasted death for every man." We are to bear them tender compassion, when we see them forsaking their own mercies, wandering from the path of

life, and hastening to everlasting destruction. We are never willingly to grieve their spirits, or give them any pain: but, on the contrary, to give them all the pleasure we innocently can; seeing we are to "please all men for their good." We are never to aggravate their faults; but willingly to allow all the good that is in them.

9. We may, and ought to speak to them on all occasions, in the most kind and obliging manner we can. We ought to speak no evil of them when they are absent, unless it be absolutely necessary; unless it be the only means we know of preventing their doing hurt: otherwise, we are to speak of them with all respect we can, without transgressing the bounds of truth. We are to behave to them, when present, with all courtesy, shewing them all the regard we can, without countenancing them in sin. We ought to do them all the good that is in our power, all they are willing to receive from us: following herein the example of the universal Friend, our Father who is in heaven: who, till they will condescend to receive greater blessings, gives them such as they are willing to accept: "causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending his rain on the just and on the unjust."

10. But what kind of friendship is it which we may not have with the world? May we not converse with ungodly men at all? Ought we wholly to avoid their company? By no means: the contrary of this has been allowed already. If we were not to converse with them at all, "we must needs go out of the world." Then we could not shew them those offices of kindness, which have been already mentioned. We may, doubtless, converse with them, first, on business, in the various purposes of this life, according to that station therein, wherein the Providence of God has placed us: secondly, When courtesy requests it; only we must take great care not to carry it too far: thirdly, When we have a reasonable hope of doing them good. But here too we have an especial need of caution, and of much prayer; otherwise, we may easily burn ourselves, in striving to pluck other brands out of the burning.

11. We may easily hurt our own souls, by sliding into a close attachment to any of them that know not God. This is the *friendship* which is "enmity with God:" we cannot be too jealous over ourselves, lest we fall into this deadly snare; lest we contract, or ever we are aware, a love of *complacence* or *delight* in them. Then only do we tread upon sure ground, when we can say with the Psalmist, "All my delight is in the saints that are upon earth, and in such as excel in virtue." We should have no *needless conversation* with them. It is our duty and our wisdom, to be no oftener, and no longer with them, than is strictly necessary. And during the whole time, we have need to remember and follow the example of him that said, "I kept my mouth, as it were, with a bridle, while the ungodly was in my sight." We should enter into no sort of connexion with them, farther than is absolutely necessary. When Jehosaphat forgot this, and formed a connexion with Ahab, what was the consequence? He first lost his substance: "the ships" they sent out "were broken at Ezion-geber." And when he was not content with this warning, as well as that of the prophet Micaiah, but would go up with him to Ramoth-gilead, he was on the point of losing his life.

12. Above all, we should tremble at the very thought of entering into a marriage-covenant, the closest of all others, with any person who does not love, or at least fear God. This is the most horrid folly, the most deplorable madness, that a child of God could possibly plunge into: as it implies every sort of connexion with the ungodly, which a Christian is bound, in conscience, to avoid. No wonder, then, it is so flatly forbidden of God; that the prohibition is so absolute and peremptory: "Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever." Nothing can be more express. Especially, if we understand by the word *unbeliever*, one that is so far from being a believer in the gospel sense, from being able to say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:" that he has not even the faith of a servant: he does not "fear God, and work righteousness."

13. But for what reason is the friendship of the world so absolutely prohibited? Why are we so strictly required to abstain from it? For two general reasons: first, because it is a sin in itself; secondly, because it is attended with most dreadful consequences.

First, It is a sin in itself: and, indeed, a sin of no common dye. According to the Oracles of God, *friendship with the world*, is no less than spiritual adultery. All who are guilty of it, are addressed by the Holy Ghost in those terms, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses." It is plainly violating of our marriage contract with God: by loving the creature more than the Creator. In flat contradiction to that kind command, "My son, give me thine heart."

14. It is a sin of the most heinous nature, as not only implying ignorance of God, and forgetfulness of him, or inattention to him, but positive "enmity against God." It is openly, palpably such. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, can ye possibly be ignorant of this, so plain, so undeniable a truth, "that the friendship of this world is enmity against God?" Nay, and how terrible is the inference which he draws from hence! "Therefore, whosoever will be a friend of the world," (the words properly rendered are, Whosoever *desireth to be a friend of the world,*) of the men who know not God, whether he attain it or not, *is*, ipso facto, *constituted an enemy of God.* This very *desire*, whether successful or not, gives him a right to that appellation.

15. And as it is a sin, a very heinous sin in itself, so it is attended with the most dreadful consequences. It frequently entangles men again in the commission of those sins, from which "they were clean escaped." It generally makes them "partakers of other men's sins," even those which they do not commit themselves. It gradually abates their abhorrence and dread of sin in general, and thereby prepares them for falling an easy prey to any strong temptation. It lays them open to all those sins of omission, whereof their worldly acquaintance are guilty. It insensibly lessens their exactness in private prayer, in family duty, in fasting,

in attending public service, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. The indifference of those that are near them, with respect to all these, will gradually influence them: even if they say not one word, (which is hardly to be supposed,) to recommend their own practice, yet their example speaks, and is many times of more force than any other language. By this example, they are unavoidably betrayed, and almost continually, into unprofitable, yea, and into uncharitable conversation, till they no longer "set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips," till they can join in backbiting, tale-bearing, and evil-speaking, without any check of conscience, having so frequently grieved the Holy Spirit of God, that he no longer reproves them for it: insomuch, that their discourse is not now, as formerly, "seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers."

16. But these are not all the deadly consequences that result from familiar intercourse with unholy men. It not only hinders them from ordering their conversation aright, but directly tends to corrupt the heart. It tends to create or increase in us, all that pride and self-sufficiency, all that fretfulness to resent: yea, every irregular passion and wrong disposition which are indulged by their companions. It gently leads them into habitual self-indulgence, and unwillingness to deny themselves; into unreadiness to bear or take up any cross; into a softness and delicacy; into evil shame, and the fear of man, that brings numberless snares. It draws them back into the love of the world, into foolish and hurtful desires, into the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, till they are swallowed up in them. So that in the end, the last state of these men is far worse than the first.

17. If the children of God will connect themselves with the men of the world, though the latter should not endeavour to make them like themselves, (which is a supposition by no means to be made,) yea, though they should neither design nor desire it; yet they will actually do it. I know not how to account for it, but it is a real fact, that their

very spirit is infectious. While you are near them, you are apt to catch their spirit, whether they will or not. Many Physicians have observed, that not only the plague, and putrid or malignant fevers, but almost every disease men are liable to, are more or less infectious. And undoubtedly so are all spiritual diseases: only with great variety. The infection is not so swiftly communicated by some as it is by others. In either case, the person already diseased, does not desire or design to infect another. The man who has the plague, does not desire or intend to communicate his distemper to you. But you are not, therefore, safe: so keep at a distance, or you will surely be infected. Does not experience shew, that the case is the same with the diseases of the mind? Suppose the proud, the vain, the passionate, the wanton, do not desire or design to infect *you* with their own distempers; yet it is best to keep at a distance from them. You are not safe when you come too near them. You will perceive, (it is well if it be not too late,) that their very breath is infectious. It has been lately discovered, That there is an atmosphere surrounding every human body, which naturally affects every one that comes within the limits of it. Is there not something analogous to this, with regard to a human spirit? If you continue long in their atmosphere, so to speak, you can hardly escape the being infected. The contagion spreads from soul to soul, as well as from body to body, even though the persons diseased do not intend or desire it. But can this reasonably be supposed? Is it not a notorious truth, that the men of the world (exceeding few excepted) eagerly desire to make their companions like themselves? Yea, and use every means, with their utmost skill and industry, to accomplish their desire. Therefore, flee for your life! Do not play with the fire, but escape before the flames kindle upon you.

18. But how many are the pleas for *Friendship with the World!* And how strong are the temptations to it! Such of these as are the most dangerous, and, at the same time, most common, we will consider.

To begin with one that is the most dangerous of all

others, and, at the same time, by no means uncommon. "I grant," says one, "the person I am about to marry, is not a religious person. She does not make any pretensions to it. She has little thought about it. But she is a beautiful creature. She is extremely agreeable, and I think will make me a lovely companion."

This is a snare indeed! Perhaps one of the greatest that human nature is liable to. This is such a temptation as no power of man is able to overcome. Nothing less than the mighty power of God, can make a way for you to escape from it. And this can work a complete deliverance: his grace is sufficient for you. But not unless you are a worker together with him: not unless you deny yourself and take up your cross. And what you do, you must do at once! Nothing can be done by degrees. Whatever you do in this important case, must be done at one stroke. If it be done at all, you must at once, cut off the right hand, and cast it from you! Here is no time for conferring with flesh and blood. At once, conquer or perish!

19. Let us turn the tables. Suppose a woman that loves God, is addressed by an agreeable man, genteel, lively, entertaining, suitable in all other respects, though not religious: what should she do in such a case? What she *should* do, if she believes the Bible, is sufficiently clear. But what *can* she do? Is not this

"A test for human frailty too severe?"

Who is able to stand in such a trial? Who can resist such a temptation! None but one that holds fast the shield of faith, and earnestly cries to the Strong for strength. None but one that gives herself to watching and prayer, and continues therein with all perseverance. If she does this, she will be a happy witness in the midst of an unbelieving world, that as "all things are possible with God," so al· "things are possible to her that believeth."

20. But either a man or a woman may ask, "What if the person who seeks my acquaintance be a person of strong natural understanding, cultivated by various learning? May not I gain much useful knowledge by a familiar inter-

course with him? May I not learn many things from him, and much improve my own understanding?" Undoubtedly you may improve your own understanding, and you may gain much knowledge. But still, if he has not, at least, the fear of God, your loss will be far greater than your gain. For you can hardly avoid decreasing in holiness as much as you increase in knowledge. And if you lose one degree of inward or outward holiness, all the knowledge you gain will be no equivalent.

21. "But his fine and strong understanding improved by education, is not his chief recommendation. He has more valuable qualifications than these: he is remarkably good humoured: he is of a compassionate, humane spirit, and has much generosity in his temper." On these very accounts, if he does not fear God, he is infinitely more dangerous. If you converse intimately with a person of his character, you will surely drink into his spirit. It is hardly possible for you to avoid stopping just where he stops. I have found nothing so difficult in all my life, as to converse with men of this kind, (*good sort of men*, as they are commonly called,) without being hurt by them. O beware of them! Converse with them just as much as business requires, and no more: otherwise, (though you do not feel any present harm, yet) by slow and imperceptible degrees, they will attach you again to earthly things, and damp the life of God in your soul.

22. It may be, the persons who are desirous of your acquaintance, though they are not experienced in religion, yet understand it well, so that you frequently reap advantage from their conversation. If this be really the case, (as I have known a few instances of the kind,) it seems, you may converse with them: only very sparingly and very cautiously. Otherwise you will lose more of your spiritual life, than all the knowledge you gain is worth.

23. "But the persons in question are useful to me, in carrying on my temporal business. Nay, on many occasions, they are necessary to me, so that I could not well carry it on without them." Instances of this kind frequently occur.

And this is doubtless a sufficient reason for having some intercourse, perhaps frequently, with men that do not fear God. But even this is by no means a reason for your contracting an intimate acquaintance with them. And you here need to take the utmost care, "lest even by that converse with them which is necessary, while your fortune in the world increases, the grace of God should decrease in your soul."

24. There may be one more plausible reason given for some intimacy with an unholy man. You may say, "I have been helpful to him. I have assisted him when he was in trouble. And he remembers it with gratitude. He esteems and loves *me*, though he does not love God. Ought I not then to love *him*? Ought I not to return love for love? Do not even heathens and publicans so?" I answer, you should certainly return love for love; but it does not follow, that you should have any intimacy with him. That would be at the peril of your soul. Let your love give itself vent in constant and fervent prayer: wrestle with God for him. But let your love for him not carry you so far, as to weaken, if not destroy your own soul.

25. "But must I not be intimate with my relations? And that, whether they fear God or not? Has not his Providence recommended these to me?" Undoubtedly it has: but there are relations, nearer or more distant. The nearest relations are husbands and wives. As these have taken each other, for better or worse, they must make the best of each other; seeing as God has joined them together, none can put them asunder; unless in case of adultery: or when the life of one or the other is in imminent danger. Parents are almost as nearly connected with their children. You cannot part with them while they are young; it being your duty, to "train them up" with all care, "in the way wherein they should go." How frequently you should converse with them when they are grown up, is to be determined by christian prudence. This also will determine, how long it is expedient for children, if it be at their own choice, to remain with their parents. In general, if they do not fear God, you should leave them as soon as

is convenient. But wherever you are, take care, (if it be in your power,) that they do not want the necessaries or conveniences of life. As for all other relations, even brothers or sisters, if they are of the world, you are under no obligation to be intimate with them: you may be civil and friendly at a distance.

26. But allowing that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and consequently that it is the most excellent way, indeed the only way to heaven, to avoid all intimacy with worldly men; yet who has resolution to walk therein? Who even of those that love or fear God? For these only are concerned in the present question. A few I have known, who, even in this respect, were lights in a benighted land: who did not and would not either contract or continue any acquaintance, with persons of the most refined and improved understanding, and the most engaging tempers, merely because they were of the world, because they were not alive to God. Yea, though they were capable of improving them in knowledge, or assisting them in business. Nay, though they admired and esteemed them for that very religion, which they did not themselves experience: a case one would hardly think possible, but of which there are many instances at this day. Familiar intercourse even with these, they steadily and resolutely refrain from, for conscience' sake.

27. Go thou and do likewise, whosoever thou art, that art a child of God by faith. Whatever it cost, flee spiritual adultery. Have no friendship with the world. However tempted thereto by profit or pleasure, contract no intimacy with worldly-minded men. And if thou hast contracted any such already, break it off without delay. Yea, if thy ungodly friend be dear to thee as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, yet confer not with flesh and blood, but pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from thee! It is not an indifferent thing. Thy life is at stake: eternal life or eternal death. And is it not better to go into life, having one eye or one hand, than having both, to be cast into hell-fire? When thou knewest no

better, the times of ignorance God winked at. But now thine eyes are opened, now the light is come; walk in the light. Touch not pitch, lest thou be defiled. At all events, *keep thyself pure!*

28. But whatever others do, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, hear this, all ye that are called Methodists. However importuned or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. Look round, and see the melancholy effects it has produced among your brethren! How many of the mighty are fallen! How many have fallen by this very thing! They would take no warning: they *would* converse, and that intimately, with earthly-minded men, till "they measured back their steps to earth again!" O "come out from among them!" from all unholy men, however harmless they may appear; "and be ye separate:" at least, so far as to have no intimacy with them. As your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" so let it be with those, and those only, who at least seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity. So "shall ye be," in a peculiar sense, "my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

SERMON LXXXVI.

IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE TO LEAVE THE WORLD.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 17, 18.

"*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the* LORD, *and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you:*

"*And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the* LORD ALMIGHTY."

1. HOW exceedingly few, in the religious world, have duly considered these solemn words! We have read them over and over, but never laid them to heart, or observed that they contain as plain and express a command as any in the whole Bible. And it is to be feared, there are still fewer that understand the general meaning of this direction. Numberless persons in England have interpreted it as a command to come out of the Established Church. And in the same sense it has been understood by thousands in the neighbouring kingdoms. Abundance of sermons have been preached, and of books written upon this supposition. And indeed many pious men have grounded their separation from the Church, chiefly on this text. "God himself," say they, "commands us, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' And it is only upon this condition that he will *receive* us, and we shall be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

2. But this interpretation is totally foreign to the design of the Apostle, who is not here speaking of this or that Church, but on quite another subject. Neither did the Apostle himself, nor any of his brethren, draw any such inference from the words. Had they done so, it would have been a flat contradiction, both to the example and precept of their Master. For although the Jewish Church was then full as *unclean*, as unholy, both inwardly and outwardly, as any Christian Church now upon earth, yet our Lord constantly attended the service of it. And he directed his followers in this, as in every other respect, to *tread in his steps*. This is clearly implied in that remarkable passage, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not," Matt. xxiii. 1. Even though they *themselves say and do not*, though their lives contradict their doctrines, though they were ungodly men, yet our Lord here not only permits, but requires his disciples to hear them. For he requires them to "observe and do what they say:" but this could not be, if they did not hear them. Accordingly the Apostles, as long as they were at Jerusalem, constantly attended the public service. Therefore, it is certain these words have no reference to a separation from the Established Church.

3. Neither have they reference to the direction given by the Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. The whole passage runs thus: "I wrote unto you in an Epistle, not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolators, for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat," ch. v. 9—11. This wholly relates to them that are members of the same Christian community. The Apostle tells them expressly, He does not give this direction, not

to company with such and such persons, with regard to the heathens or to men in general: and adds this plain account, "For then must ye needs go out of the world:" you could transact no business in it. "But if any man that is called a brother," that is, connected with you in the same religious Society, "be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat." How important a caution is this! But how little is it observed, even by those that are, in other respects, conscientious Christians! Indeed some parts of it are not easy to be observed, for a plain reason; they are not easy to be understood. I mean, it is not easy to be understood, to whom the characters belong. It is very difficult, for instance, to know, unless in some glaring cases, to whom the character of an *extortioner*, or of a *covetous* man belongs. We can hardly know one or the other, without seeming, at least, to be "busy bodies in other men's matters." And yet the prohibition is as strong concerning converse with these, as with fornicators or adulterers. We can only act in the simplicity of our hearts, without setting up for infallible judges, (still willing to be better informed,) according to the best light we have.

But although this direction relates only to our Christian brethren, (such, at least, by outward profession,) that in the text is of a far wider extent; it, unquestionably, relates to all mankind. It clearly requires us, to keep at a distance, as far as is practicable, from all ungodly men. Indeed it seems, the word which we render *unclean thing*, τῳ ακαθαρτου, might rather be rendered *unclean person*; probably alluding to the Ceremonial Law, which forbad *touching* one that was legally unclean. But even here, were we to understand the expression literally, were we to take the words in the strictest sense, the same absurdity would follow; we must needs, as the Apostle speaks, "go out of the world." We should not be able to abide in those callings, which the Providence of God has assigned us. Were we not to converse at all with men of those characters, it would be impossible to transact our temporal busi-

ness. So that every conscientious Christian would have nothing to do but to flee into the desart. It would not suffice, to turn recluses, to shut ourselves up in monastaries or nunneries: for even then we must have some intercourse with ungodly men, in order to procure the necessaries of life.

5. The words, therefore, must necessarily be understood, with considerable restriction. They do not prohibit our conversing with any man, good or bad, in the way of worldly business. A thousand occasions will occur, wherein we must converse with them, in order to transact those affairs which cannot be done without them. And some of these may require us to have frequent intercourse with drunkards, or fornicators: yea, sometimes it may be requisite for us to spend a considerable time in their company: otherwise we should not be able to fulfil the duties of our several callings. Such conversation, therefore, with men, holy or unholy, is no way contrary to the Apostle's advice.

6. What is it then which the Apostle forbids? First, The conversing with ungodly men, when there is no necessity, no providential call, no business, that requires it: Secondly, The conversing with them more frequently than business necessarily requires: Thirdly, The spending more time in their company than is necessary to finish our business: above all, Fourthly, the choosing ungodly persons, however ingenious or agreeable, to be our ordinary companions, or to be our familiar friends. If any instance of this kind will admit of less excuse than others, it is that which the Apostle expressly forbids elsewhere, The being "unequally yoked with an unbeliever" in marriage: with any person that has not the love of God in his heart, or at least, the fear of God before his eyes. I do not know any thing that can justify this: neither the sense, wit, or beauty of the person: nor temporal advantage; nor fear of want; no, nor even the command of a parent. For if any parent command what is contrary to the Word of God, the child ought to obey God rather than man.

7. The ground of this prohibition is laid down at large

in the preceding verses. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" (Taking that word in the extensive sense, for him that hath neither the love nor fear of God:) "Ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It follows, "Wherefore, come out from among them;" the unrighteous, the children of darkness, the sons of Belial, the unbelievers: "And be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," or person, "and I will receive you."

8. Here is the ground of this prohibition, to have any more intercourse with unholy men than is absolutely necessary. There can be no profitable *fellowship* between the righteous and the unrighteous; as there can be *no communion* between light and darkness; (whether you understand this of natural or spiritual darkness.) As Christ can have *no concord* with *Belial*, so a believer in him can have no concord with an unbeliever. It is absurd to imagine, that any true union or concord should be between two persons, while one of them remains in darkness, and the other walks in the light. They are subjects, not only of two separate, but of two opposite kingdoms. They act upon quite different principles: they aim at quite different ends. It will necessarily follow, that frequently, if not always, they will walk in different paths. How can they walk together, till they are agreed?—Until they both serve either Christ or Belial?

9. And what are the consequences of our not obeying this direction? Of our not coming out from among unholy men? Of not being separate from them, but contracting or continuing a familiar intercourse with them? It is probable, it will not immediately have any apparent, visible ill consequences. It is hardly to be expected, that it will immediately lead us into any outward sin. Perhaps it may not presently occasion our neglect of any outward

duty. It will first sap the foundations of Religion: it will, by little and little, damp our zeal for God: it will gently cool that fervency of spirit, which attended our first love. If they do not openly oppose any thing we say or do, yet their very spirit will, by insensible degrees, affect our spirit, and transfuse into it the same lukewarmness and indifference toward God and the things of God. It will weaken all the springs of our soul, destroy the vigour of our spirit, and cause us more and more to slacken our pace, in running the race that is set before us.

10. By the same degrees all needless intercourse with unholy men will weaken our divine evidence and conviction of things unseen: it will dim the eyes of the soul whereby we see him that is invisible, and weaken our confidence in him. It will gradually abate our "taste of the powers of the world to come," and deaden that hope, which before made us "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus." It will imperceptibly cool that flame of love, which before enabled us to say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" Thus it strikes at the root of all vital religion, of our fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

11. By the same degrees, and in the same secret and unobserved manner, it will prepare us to "measure back our steps to earth again." It will lead us softly, to relapse into the love of the world from which we were clean escaped; to fall gently into *the desire of the flesh*, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense; *the desire of the eye*, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of imagination; *and the pride of life*, the seeking it in pomp, in riches, or in the praise of man. And all this may be done, by the assistance of the spirit, who *beguiled Eve through his subtilty*, before we are sensible of his attack, or are conscious of any loss.

12. And it is not only the love of the world in all its branches, which necessarily steals upon us, while we converse with men of a worldly spirit, farther than duty requires; but every other evil passion and temper, of which

the human soul is capable: in particular, pride, vanity, censoriousness, evil-surmising, proneness to revenge: while, on the other hand, levity, gaity, and dissipation, steal upon us and increase continually. We know how all these abound in the men that know not God. And it cannot be but they will insinuate themselves into all, who frequently and freely converse with them: they insinuate most deeply into those who are not apprehensive of any danger: and most of all, if they have any particular affection, if they have more love than duty requires, for those who do not love God, with whom they familiarly converse.

13. Hitherto I have supposed that the persons with whom you converse, are such as we use to call *good sort of people:* such as are stiled, in the cant term of the day, men of *worthy* characters: (one of the most silly, insignificant words, that ever came into fashion.) I have supposed them to be free from cursing, swearing, profaneness; from sabbath-breaking and drunkenness, from lewdness either in word or action; from dishonesty, lying, and slandering: in a word, to be entirely clear from open vice of every kind. Otherwise, whoever has even the fear of God must, in anywise, keep at a distance from them. But I am afraid I have made a supposition which hardly can be admitted. I am afraid, some of the persons with whom you converse, more than business necessarily requires, do not deserve even the character of *good sort of men*: are not *worthy* of any thing but shame and contempt. Do not some of them live in open sin?—In cursing and swearing, drunkenness or uncleanness? You cannot long be ignorant of this: for they take little pains to hide it. Now is it not certain, all vice is of an infectious nature; for who can touch pitch, and not be defiled? From these, therefore, you ought undoubtedly to flee as from the face of a serpent. Otherwise, how soon may "evil communications corrupt good manners!"

14. I have supposed, likewise, that these unholy persons with whom you frequently converse, have no desire to communicate their own spirit to *you*, or to induce *you* to follow

their example. But this also is a supposition which can hardly be admitted. In many cases their interest may be advanced, by your being a partaker of their sins. But supposing interest to be out of the question, does not every man naturally desire, and more or less endeavour, to bring over his acquaintance to his own opinion or party? So that as all good men desire and endeavour to make others good, like themselves, in like manner, all bad men desire and endeavour to make their companions as bad as themselves.

15. But if they do not, if we allow this almost impossible supposition, that they do not desire or use any endeavours, to bring you over to their own temper and practice, still it is dangerous to converse with them. I speak, not only of openly vicious men, but of all that do not love God, or at least fear him, and sincerely seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Admit such companions do not endeavour to make you like themselves, does this prove you are in no danger from them? See that poor wretch that is ill of the plague! He does not desire, he does not use the least endeavour to communicate his distemper to you. Yet have a care! Touch him not! Nay, go not near him, or you know not how soon you may be in the same condition. To draw the parallel; though we should suppose the man of the world does not desire, design, or endeavour to communicate his distemper to you, yet touch him not! Come not too near him. For it is not only his reasonings or persuasions that may infect your soul, but his very breath is infectious: particularly to those who are apprehensive of no danger.

16. If conversing freely with worldly-minded men has no other ill effect upon you, it will surely, by imperceptible degrees, make you less heavenly-minded. It will give a bias to your mind, which will continually draw your soul to earth. It will incline you, without your being conscious of it, instead of being wholly transformed in the renewing of your mind, to be again conformed to this world, in its spirit, in its maxims, and in its vain conversation. You will fall again into that levity and dissipation of spirit, from which you had

before clean escaped, into that superfluity of apparel, and into that foolish, frothy, unprofitable conversation, which was an abomination to you, when your soul was alive to God. And you will daily decline from that simplicity both of speech and behaviour, whereby you once adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour.

17. And if you go thus far in conformity to the world, it is hardly to be expected, you will stop here. You will go farther in a short time: having once lost your footing and begun to slide down, it is a thousand to one, you will not stop till you come to the bottom of the hill: till you fall yourself into some of those outward sins, which your companions commit before your eyes, or in your hearing. Hereby the dread and horror which struck you at first, will gradually abate, till at length you are prevailed upon to follow their example. But suppose they do not lead you into outward sin, if they infect your spirit with pride, anger, or love of the world, it is enough: it is sufficient, without deep repentance, to drown your soul in everlasting perdition: seeing (abstracted from all outward sin) *to be carnally-minded is death.*

18. But as dangerous as it is to converse familiarly with men that know not God, it is more dangerous still for men to converse with women of that character: as they are generally more insinuating than men, and have far greater power of persuasion: particularly if they are agreeable in their persons, or pleasing in their conversation. You must be more than man, if you can converse with such, and not suffer any loss. If you do not feel any foolish or unholy desire; (and who can promise that you shall not?) yet it is scarce possible, that you should not feel more or less of an improper softness, which will make you less willing and less able, to persist in that habit of denying yourself, and taking up your cross daily, which constitute the character of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And we know that not only fornicators and adulterers, but even *the soft and effeminate*, the delicate followers of a self-denying Master, *shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God.*

19. Such are the consequences which must surely, though perhaps slowly follow, the mixing of the children of God with the men of the world. And by this mean more than by any other, yea, than by all others put together, are the people called *Methodists* likely to lose their strength, and become like other men. It is indeed with a good design, and from a real desire of promoting the glory of God, that many of them admit of a familiar conversation with men that know not God. You have a hope of awakening them out of sleep, and persuading them to seek the things that make for their peace. But if, after a competent time of trial, you make no impression upon them, it will be your wisdom to give them up to God: otherwise, you are more likely to receive hurt from them, than to do them any good. For if you do not raise their hearts up to heaven, they will draw yours down to earth. Therefore, retreat in time, "and come out from among them, and be ye separate."

20. But how may this be done? What is the most easy and effectual method of separating ourselves from unholy men? Perhaps a few advices will make this plain, to those that desire to know and do the will of God.

First: Invite no unholy person to your house, unless on some very particular occasion. You may say, "But civility requires this; and sure, religion is no enemy to civility. Nay, the Apostle himself directs us to *be courteous*, as well as to *be pitiful*." I answer, You may be civil, sufficiently civil, and yet keep them at a proper distance. You may be courteous in a thousand instances, and yet stand aloof from them. And it never was the design of the Apostle to recommend any such courtesy as must necessarily prove a snare to the soul.

21. Secondly: On no account accept any invitation from an unholy person. Never be prevailed upon to pay a visit, unless you wish it to be repaid. It may be, a person desirous of your acquaintance, will repeat the visit twice or thrice. But if you steadily refrain from returning it, the visitant will soon be tired. It is not improbable but he will be disobliged: and perhaps he will shew some marks

of resentment. Lay your account with this, that when any thing of the kind occurs, you may neither be surprised nor discouraged. It is better to please God and displease man, than to please man and displease God.

22. Thirdly: It is probable, you were acquainted with men of the world, before you yourself knew God. What is best to be done with regard to these? How may you most easily drop their acquaintance? First, allow a sufficient time to try, whether you cannot, by argument and persuasion, induce them to choose the better part. Spare no pains. Exert all your faith and love, and wrestle with God in their behalf. If, after all, you cannot perceive that any impression is made upon them, it is your duty gently to withdraw from them, that you be not entangled with them. This may be done in a short time, easily and quietly, by not returning their visits. But you must expect they will upbraid you with haughtiness and unkindness, if not to your face, yet behind your back. And this you can suffer for a good conscience. It is, properly, the reproach of Christ.

23. When it pleased God to give *me* a settled resolution, to be not a *nominal*, but a *real* Christian, (being then about 22 years of age) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference: I knew my own ignorance; they did not know theirs. I faintly endeavoured to help them; but in vain. Mean time I found, by sad experience, that even their *harmless* conversation, so called, damped all my good resolutions. But how to get rid of them was the question, which I resolved in my mind again and again. I saw no possible way, unless it should please God to remove me to another College. He did so, in a manner utterly contrary to all human probability. I was elected Fellow of a College, where I knew not one person. I foresaw, abundance of people would come to see me, either out of friendship, civility, or curiosity; and that I should have offers of acquaintance, new and old: but I had now fixed my plan. Entering now, as it were, into a new world, I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but

by choice; and to choose such only as I had reason to believe, would help me on my way to heaven. In consequence of this, I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to think that the greater part of these truly loved or feared God. Such acquaintance, therefore, I did not choose: I could not expect they would do me any good. Therefore, when any of these came, I behaved as courteously as I could. But to the question, "When will you come to see me?" I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more. And I bless God, this has been my invariable rule for about threescore years. I knew many reflections would follow; but that did not move me, as I knew full well, it was my calling to go *through evil report and good report.*

24. I earnestly advise all of you who resolve to be, not *almost, but altogether Christians*, to adopt the same plan, however contrary it may be to flesh and blood. Narrowly observe, which of those that fall in your way, are like minded with yourself: who among them have you reason to believe fears God and works righteousness? Set them down as worthy of your acquaintance; gladly and freely converse with them at all opportunities. As to all who do not answer that character, gently and quietly let them drop. However good natured and sensible they may be, they will do you no real service. Nay, if they did not lead you into outward sin, yet they would be a continual clog to your soul, and would hinder your running with vigour and cheerfulness the race that is set before you. And if any of your friends, that did once run well, "turn back from the holy commandment once delivered to them;" first use every method that prudence can suggest, to bring them again into the good way. But if you cannot prevail, let them go; only still commending them unto God in prayer. Drop all familiar intercourse with them, and save your own soul.

25. I advise you, Fourthly, Walk circumspectly, with regard to your relations. With your parents, whether

religious or not, you must certainly converse, if they desire it: and with your brothers and sisters: more especially, if they want your service. I do not know that you are under any such obligation, with respect to your more distant relations. Courtesy, indeed, and natural affection may require, that you should visit them sometimes. But if they neither know nor seek God, it should certainly be as seldom as possible. And when you are with them, you should not stay a day longer than decency requires. Again, whosoever of them you are with at any time, remember that solemn caution of the Apostle, "Let no corrupt communication [conversation] come out of your mouth: but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." You have no authority to vary from this rule; otherwise, you *grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* And if you keep closely to it, those who have no religion will soon dispense with your company.

26. Thus it is that those who fear or love God should *come out from among* all that do not fear him. Thus in a plain scriptural sense, you should *be separated* from them, from all unnecessary intercourse with them. Yea, *Touch not*, saith the Lord, *the unclean thing* or *person*, any farther than necessity requires: *and I will receive you* into the household of God. *And I will be unto you a Father*, will embrace you with paternal affection: *and ye shall be unto me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* The promise is express to all that renounce the company of ungodly men, (provided their spirit and conversation are, in other respects, also suitable to their duty.) God does here absolutely engage to give them all the blessings he has prepared for his beloved children, both in time and eternity. Let all those, therefore, who have any regard for the favour and blessings of God, first, beware how they contract any acquaintance, or form any connection with ungodly men; any farther than necessary business, or some other providential call requires: and, secondly, with all possible speed, all that the nature of the thing will admit, break off all such acquaintance already contracted, and all such

connexions already formed. Let no pleasure resulting from such acquaintance, no gain found or expected from such connexions, be of any consideration, when laid in the balance against a clear, positive command of God. In such a case, *pluck out the right eye*, tear away the most pleasing acquaintance, *and cast it from thee:* give up all thought, all design of seeking it again. *Cut off the right hand:* absolutely renounce the most profitable connexion, *and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye*, or one hand, *than having two, to be cast into hell-fire.*

SERMON LXXXVII.

ON TEMPTATION.

1 CORINTHIANS X. 13.

"*There hath no Temptation taken you, but such as is common to Man. And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able: but will with the Temptation also make a Way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*"

1. IN the foregoing part of the chapter the Apostle has been reciting on the one hand, the unparalleled mercies of God to the Israelites; and, on the other, the unparalleled ingratitude of that disobedient and gainsaying people. And all these things, as the Apostle observes, *were written for our ensample:* that we might take warning from them, so as to avoid their grievous sins, and escape their terrible punishment. He then adds that solemn and important caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. But if we observe these words attentively, will there not appear a considerable difficulty in them, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall?" If a man only *thinks he stands*, he is in no danger of falling. It is not possible that any one should fall, if he only *thinks he stands*. The same difficulty occurs, according to our translation in those well known words of our Lord, (the

importance of which we may easily learn from their being repeated in the gospel no less than eight times,) "To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even what he seemeth to have." *That which he* seemeth to have! Nay, if he only *seems to have it*, it is impossible it should be taken away. None can take away from another what he only *seems to have*. What a man only seems to have, he cannot possibly lose. This difficulty may, at first, appear impossible to be surmounted. It is really so; it cannot be surmounted, if the common translation be allowed. But if we observe the proper meaning of the original word, the difficulty vanishes away. It may be allowed that the word δοκει does (sometimes, at least, in some authors) mean no more than *to seem*. But I much doubt whether it ever bears that meaning, in any part of the inspired writings. By a careful consideration of every text in the New Testament, wherein this word occurs, I am fully convinced, that it no where lessens, but every where strengthens the sense of the word to which it is annexed. Accordingly ο δοκει εχειν, does not mean, *what he seems to have;* but on the contrary, *what he assuredly hath.* And so ο δοκων εςαναι, not *he that seemeth to stand*, or he that *thinketh he standeth*, but *he that assuredly standeth;* he who standeth so fast, that he does not appear to be in any danger of falling: he that saith, like David, "I shall never be moved: thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong." Yet at that very time, thus saith the Lord, "Be not high-minded, but fear. Else shalt thou be cut off:" else shalt thou also be moved from thy steadfastness. The strength which thou assuredly hast, shall be taken away. As firmly as thou didst really stand, thou wilt fall into sin, if not into hell.

3. But lest any should be discouraged by the consideration of those who once ran well, and were afterwards overcome by temptation; lest the fearful of heart should be utterly cast down, supposing it impossible for them to stand, the Apostle subjoins to that serious exhortation, these comfortable words, "There hath no temptation taken you, but

such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

I. 1. Let us begin with the observation which ushers in this comfortable promise, "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man." Our translators seem to have been sensible that this expression, *common to man*, does by no means reach the force of the original word. Hence they substitute another in the margin, *moderate*. But this seems to be less significant than the other, and farther from the meaning of it. Indeed it is not easy to find any single word in the English tongue, which answers the word ανθρωπινος. I believe the sense of it can only be expressed by some such circumlocution as this: "Such as is suited to the nature and circumstances of man: such as every man may reasonably expect, if he consider the nature of his body and his soul, and his situation in the present world." If we duly consider these, we shall not be surprised at any temptation that hath befallen us: seeing it is no other than such a creature, in such a situation, has all reason to expect.

2. Consider, First, the nature of that body with which your soul is connected. How many are the evils which it is every day, every hour liable to! Weakness, sickness, and disorders of a thousand kinds, are its natural attendants. Consider the inconceivably minute fibres, threads, abundantly finer than hair, (called from thence capillary vessels,) whereof every part of it is composed; consider the innumerable multitude of equally fine pipes and strainers, all filled with circulating juice! And will not the breach of a few of these fibres, or the obstruction of a few of these tubes, particularly in the brain, or heart, or lungs, destroy our ease, health, strength, if not life itself? Now if we observe that all pain implies temptation, how numberless must the temptations be, which will beset every man, more or less, sooner or later, while he dwells in this corruptible body!

3. Consider, Secondly, the present state of the soul, as long as it inhabits the house of clay. I do not mean, in its unregenerate state, while it lies in darkness and the shadow of death; under the dominion of the prince of darkness, without hope, and without God in the world. No: look upon men who are raised above that deplorable state. See those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Yet still how weak is their understanding! How limited its extent! How confused, how inaccurate are our apprehensions, of even the things that are round about us! How liable are the wisest of men to mistake!—To form false judgments! —To take falsehood for truth, and truth for falsehood!— Evil for good, and good for evil! What starts, what wanderings of imagination are we continually subject to! And how many are the temptations which we have to expect, even from these innocent infirmities!

4. Consider, Thirdly, what is the present situation of even those that fear God. They dwell in the ruins of a disordered world, among men that know not God, that care not for him, and whose heart is fully set in them to do evil. How many are forced to cry out, "Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech: to have my habitations among the tents of Kedar," among the enemies of God and man! How immensely out-numbered are those that would do well, by them that neither fear God, nor regard man! And how striking is Cowley's observation! If a man that was armed cap-a-pie, were closed in by a thousand naked Indians, their number would give them such advantage over him that it would be scarcely possible for him to escape. What hope then would there be for a naked, unarmed man to escape, who was surrounded by a thousand armed men! Now this is the case of every good man. He is not armed either with force or fraud, and is turned out naked as he is, among thousands that are armed with the whole armour of Satan, and provided with all the weapons which the prince of this world can supply out of the armoury of hell. If then he be not destroyed, yet how must a good man be tempted in the midst of this evil world!

5. But is it only from wicked men that temptations arise to them that fear God? It is very natural to imagine this: and almost every one thinks so. Hence how many of us have said in our hearts, "O! if my lot were but cast among good men, among those that loved or even feared God, I should be free from all these temptations." Perhaps you would: probably you would not find the same sort of temptations which you have now to encounter. But you would surely meet with temptations of some other kind, which you would find equally hard to bear. For even good men, in general, though sin has not dominion over them, yet are not freed from the remains of it. They have still the remains of an evil heart, ever prone to "depart from the living God." They have the seeds of pride, of anger, of foolish desire; indeed, of every unholy temper. And any of these, if they do not continually watch and pray, may, and naturally will spring up, and trouble not themselves only, but all that are round about them. We must not, therefore, depend upon finding no temptation, from those that fear, yea, in a measure, love God. Much less must we be surprised, if some of those who once loved God in sincerity, should lay greater temptations in our way than many of those that never knew him.

6. "But can we expect to find any temptation from those that are *perfected in love?*" This is an important question, and deserves a particular consideration. I answer, first, You may find every kind of temptation, from those who *suppose* they are perfected, when, indeed, they are not: and so you may, secondly, from those who once really were so, but are now moved from their steadfastness. And if you are not aware of this, if you think they are still what they were once, the temptation will be harder to bear. Nay, thirdly, even those who "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free," who are now really perfect in love, may still be an occasion of temptation to *you*. For they are still encompassed with infirmities. They may be dull of apprehension: they may have a natural heedlessness, or a treacherous memory: they may

have too lively an imagination: and any of these may cause little improprieties, either in speech or behaviour, which, though not sinful in themselves, may try all the grace you have: especially if you impute to perverseness of will, (as it is very natural to do,) what is really owing to defect of memory, or weakness of understanding; if these appear to you to be voluntary mistakes, which are really involuntary. So proper was the answer which a saint of God (now in Abraham's bosom) gave me some years ago, when I said, 'Jenny, surely now your Mistress and you, can neither of you be a trial to the other, as God has saved you both from sin:' "O sir," said she, "if we are saved from sin, we still have infirmities enough to try all the grace that God has given us."

7. But besides evil men, do not evil spirits also continually surround us on every side? Do not Satan and his angels continually go about, seeking whom they may devour? Who is out of the reach of their malice and subtilty? Not the wisest or the best of the children of men. "The servant is not above his Master." If then they tempted him, will they not tempt us also? Yea, it may be, should God see good to permit, more or less to the end of our lives. *No temptation*, therefore, *hath taken us*, which we had not reason to expect, either from our body or soul, either from evil spirits or evil men, yea, or even from good men, till our spirits return to God that gave them.

II. Meantime what a comfort it is to know, with the utmost certainty, that "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able." He knoweth what our ability is, and cannot be mistaken. "He knoweth," precisely, "whereof we are made!" "he remembereth that we are but dust." And he will suffer no temptation to befall us, but such as is proportioned to our strength. Not only his justice requires this, which could not punish us for not resisting any temptation, if it were so disproportioned to our strength, that it was impossible for us to resist it. Not only his mercy; that tender mercy, which is over us, as well as over all his works: but above

all his faithfulness; seeing all his words are faithful and true; and the whole tenor of his promises altogether agrees with that declaration, "As thy day, so thy strength shall be."

2. In that execrable slaughter-house, the Romish Inquisition, (most unfortunately called, "The House of Mercy!") it is the custom of those holy butchers, while they are tearing a man's sinews upon the rack, to have the Physician of the house standing by. His business is, from time to time, to observe the eyes, the pulse, and other circumstances of the sufferer, and to give notice, when the torture has continued so long as it can, without putting an end to his life: that it may be preserved long enough for him to undergo the residue of their tortures. But notwithstanding all the Physician's care, he is sometimes mistaken; and death puts a period to the sufferings of the patient before his tormentors are aware. We may observe something like this in our own case. In whatever sufferings or temptations we are, our great Physician never departs from us. He is about our bed, and about our path. He observes every symptom of our distress, that it may not rise above our strength. And he cannot be mistaken concerning us. He knows the souls and bodies which he has given us. He sees exactly how much we can endure with our present degree of strength. And if this be not sufficient, he can increase it, to whatever degree it pleases him. Nothing, therefore, is more certain, than that in consequence of his wisdom, as well as his justice, mercy, and faithfulness, he never will, he never can suffer us to be tempted above that we are able: above the strength which he either hath given already, or will give as soon as we need it.

III. 1. "He will with the temptation also," (this is the third point we are to consider,) "make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

The word εκβασιν, which we render *a way to escape*, is extremely significant. The meaning of it is nearly expressed by the English word *out-let;* but more exact by the old word *out-gate*, still frequently used by the Scottish

Writers. It literally means *a way out.* And this God will either find or make; which he that hath all wisdom, as well as all power in heaven and earth, can never be at a loss how to do.

2. Either he *makes a way to escape* out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it, or *in the temptation:* that is, the occasion remaining as it was, it is a temptation no longer. First: He makes a way to escape out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it. The histories of mankind, of the Church in particular, afford us numberless instances of this. And many have occurred in our own memory, and within the little circle of our acquaintance. One of many I think it worth while to relate, as a memorable instance of the faithfulness of God, in making a way to escape out of temptation:—Elizabeth Chadsey, then living in London, (whose daughter is living at this day, and is no dishonour to her parent,) was advised to administer to her husband, who was supposed to leave much substance behind him. But when a full enquiry into his circumstances was made, it appeared that this supposition was utterly destitute of foundation: and that he not only left nothing at all behind him, but also was very considerably in debt. It was not long after his burial, that a person came to her house, and said, "Mrs. Chadsey, you are much indebted to your landlord, and he has sent me to demand the rent that is due to him." She answered, "Sir, I have not so much money in the world: indeed I have none at all!" "But," said he, "have you nothing that will fetch money?" She replied, "Sir, you see all that I have. I have nothing in the house, but these six little children." "Then," said he, "I must execute my writ and carry you to Newgate. But it is a hard case. I will leave you here till to-morrow, and will go and try, if I cannot persuade your landlord to give you time." He returned the next morning and said, "I have done all I can, I have used all the arguments I could think of, but your landlord is not to be moved. He vows, if I do not carry you to prison without delay, I shall go thither myself." She an-

swered, "You have done *your* part. The Will of the Lord be done!" He said, "I will venture to make one trial more, and will come again in the morning." He came in the morning, and said, "Mrs. Chadsey, God has undertaken your cause. None can give you any trouble now: for your landlord died last night. But he has left no Will: and no one knows, who is heir to the estate."

3. Thus God is able to deliver out of temptations, by removing the occasion of them. But are there not temptations, the occasions of which cannot be taken away? Is it not a striking instance of this kind, which we have in a late publication? "I was walking," (says the Writer of the Letter,) "over Dover Cliffs, in a calm, pleasant evening, with a person whom I tenderly loved, and to whom I was to be married in a few days. While we were engaged in earnest conversation, her foot slipped, she fell down, and I saw her dashed in pieces on the beach. I lifted up my hands, and cried out, 'This evil admits of no remedy. I must now go mourning all my days! My wound is incurable. It is impossible I should ever find such another woman! One so every way fitted for me.' I added in an agony, 'This is such an affliction, as even God himself cannot redress!' And just as I uttered the words I awoke: for it was a dream!"—Just so can God remove any possible temptation! Making it like a dream when one waketh!

4. Thus is God able to deliver out of temptation, by taking away the very ground of it. And he is equally able to deliver in the temptation, which, perhaps, is the greatest deliverance of all. I mean, suffering the occasion to remain as it was, he will take away the bitterness of it: so that it shall not be a temptation at all, but only an occasion of thanksgiving. How many proofs of this have the children of God, even in their daily experience! How frequently are they encompassed with trouble!—Or visited with pain or sickness! And when they cry unto the Lord, at some times he takes away the cup from them: he removes the trouble, or sickness, or pain; and it is as though it never had been: at other times, he does not make any

outward change; outward trouble, or pain, or sickness continue: but the consolations of the Holy One so increase, as to over-balance them all. And they can boldly declare,

"Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
When thou, my God, art near."

5. An eminent instance of this kind of deliverance is that which occurs in the life of that excellent Man, the Marquis de Renty. When he was in a violent fit of the rheumatism, a friend asked him, "Sir, are you in much pain?" He answered, "My pains are extreme: but through the mercy of God, I give myself up, not to them, but to him." It was in the same spirit that my own father answered, though exhausted with a severe illness, (an ulcer in the bowels, which had given him little rest day or night, for upwards of seven months:) When I asked, "Sir, are you in pain now?" He answered, with a strong and loud voice, "God does indeed chasten me with pain; yea, all my bones with strong pain. But I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all."

6. We may observe one more instance of a somewhat similar kind, in the life of the Marquis de Renty. When his wife, whom he very tenderly loved, was exceedingly ill, and supposed to be near death, a friend took the liberty to enquire, how he felt himself on the occasion? He replied, "I cannot but say, that this trial affects me in the most tender part. I am exquisitely sensible of my loss. I feel more than it is possible to express. And yet I am so satisfied, that the Will of God is done, and not the will of a vile sinner, that were it not for fear of giving offence to others, I could dance and sing!" Thus the merciful, the just, the faithful God, will in one way or other, "in every temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

7. This whole passage is fruitful of instruction. Some of the lessons which we may learn from it are,

First: "Let him that most assuredly standeth *take heed lest he fall*" into *murmuring:* lest he say in his heart, "Surely no one's case is like mine: no one was ever tried

like *me*." Yea, ten thousand. "There has no temptation taken you," but such as is "common to man:" such as you might reasonably expect, if you considered *what you are*, a sinner born to die, a sinful inhabitant of a mortal body, liable to numberless inward and outward sufferings: and *where you are*, in a shattered, disordered world, surrounded by evil men and evil spirits: consider this, and you will not repine at the common lot, the general condition of humanity.

8. Secondly, Let him that standeth take *heed lest he fall*, lest he *tempt God*, by thinking or saying, "This is insupportable: this is too hard: I can never get through it; my burden is heavier than I can bear." Not so: unless something is too hard for God. He will not suffer you to be *tempted above that ye are able*. He proportions the burden to your strength. If you want more strength, ask and it shall be given you.

9. Thirdly: "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall," lest he *tempt God by unbelief*, by distrusting his faithfulness. Hath he said, "in every temptation he will make a way to escape?" And shall he not do it? Yea, verily;

"And far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When fully he the work hath wrought,
That caus'd thy needless fear."

10. Let us then receive every trial with calm resignation, and with humble confidence, that he who hath all power, all wisdom, all mercy, all faithfulness, will first support us in every temptation, and then deliver us out of all: so that in the end, all things shall work together for good, and we shall happily experience, that all these things were for our profit, that we "might be partakers of his holiness."

SERMON LXXXVIII.

ON PATIENCE.

JAMES I. 4.

"Let Patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

1. "MY Brethren," says the Apostle in the preceding verse, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." At first view, this may appear a strange direction; seeing most temptations are, "for the present, not joyous, but grievous." Nevertheless ye know by your own experience, that "the trial of your faith worketh patience:" and if "patience have its perfect work, ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

2. It is not to any particular person, or church, that the Apostle gives this instruction; but to all who are partakers of like precious faith, and are seeking after that common salvation. For as long as any of us are upon earth, we are in the region of temptation. He who came into the world, to save his people from their sins, did not come to save them from temptation. He, himself, "knew no sin:" yet while he was in this vale of tears, "he suffered, being tempted:" and herein also "left us an example, that we should tread in his steps." We are liable to a thousand temptations, from the corruptible body variously affecting the soul. The soul itself, encompassed, as it is, with infirmities, exposes us to ten thousand more. And how many

are the temptations which we meet with even from the good men, (such, at least, they are in part, in their general character,) with whom we are called to converse from day to day? Yet what are these to the temptations we may expect to meet with from an evil world? Seeing we all, in effect, "dwell with Mesech, and have our habitation in the tents of Kedar!" Add to this, that the most dangerous of our enemies, are not those that assault us openly. No:

"Angels our march oppose,
Who still in strength excel:
Our secret, sworn, eternal foes,
Countless, invisible!"

For is not our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion," with all his infernal legions, "still going about seeking whom he may devour?" This is the case with all the children of men. Yea, and with all the children of God, as long as they sojourn in this strange land. Therefore, if we do not wilfully and carelessly rush into them, yet we shall surely "fall into divers temptations;" temptations innumerable as the stars of heaven, and those varied and complicated a thousand ways. But instead of counting this a loss, as unbelievers would do: "count it all joy: knowing that the trial of your faith," even when it is "tried as by fire, worketh patience." But "let patience have its perfect work, and ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

3. But what is *Patience?* We do not now speak of a Heathen Virtue: neither of a natural indolence: but of a gracious temper, wrought in the heart of a believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the manner, and for the time that pleases him. We thereby hold the middle way, neither ολιγωρουντες, *despising* our sufferings, *making little* of them, passing over them lightly, as if they were owing to chance, or second causes: nor on the other hand εκλυομενοι, *affected too much, unnerved, dissolved, sinking under them.* We may observe, the proper object of Patience is suffering, either in body or mind. Patience does not imply the not *feeling* this: it is not Apathy or Insensibility. It is at the utmost

distance from Stoical Stupidity! yea, at an equal distance from fretfulness or dejection. The patient believer is preserved from falling into either of these extremes, by considering who is the Author of all his suffering, even God his Father: what is the *motive* of his *giving us* to suffer? Not so properly his justice as his love: and what is the *end* of it? Our "profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness."

4. Very nearly related to Patience is *Meekness:* if it be not rather a species of it. For may it not be defined, Patient of Injuries, particularly affronts, reproach, or unjust censure? This teaches not to return evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing. Our blessed Lord himself, seems to place a peculiar value upon this temper. This he peculiarly calls us to learn of him, if we would find rest for our souls.

5. But what may we understand by the *Work of Patience?* "Let patience have its perfect work." It seems to mean, Let it have its full fruit or effect. And what is the fruit which the Spirit of God is accustomed to produce hereby, in the heart of a believer? One immediate fruit of Patience is *Peace:* a sweet tranquillity of mind, a serenity of spirit, which can never be found unless where patience reigns. And this peace often rises into joy. Even in the midst of various temptations, those that are enabled *in patience to possess their souls*, can witness, not only quietness of spirit, but triumph and exultation. This both

"Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven."

6. How lively is the account which the Apostle Peter gives, not only of the peace and joy, but of the hope and love which God works in those patient sufferers, "who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation?" Indeed he appears herein to have an eye to this very passage of St. James: "Though ye are grieved for a season, with manifold temptations," (the very word ποικιλοις πειρασμοις) "that the trial of your faith," (the same expression which was used by St. James,) "may be found to

praise, and honour, and glory, at the Revelation of Jesus Christ: whom, having not seen, ye love: in whom, though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." See here the peace, the joy, and the love, which, through the mighty power of God, are the fruit or *work of patience!*

7. And as peace, hope, joy and love, are the fruits of patience, both springing from, and confirmed by it, so is also rational, genuine courage, which, indeed, cannot subsist without patience. The brutal courage, or rather fierceness of a lion, may probably spring from impatience. But true fortitude, the courage of a man, springs from just the contrary temper. Christian *zeal* is likewise confirmed and increased by Patience. And so is *activity* in every good work: the same Spirit inciting us to be

"Patient in bearing ill, and doing well;"

making us equally willing to do and suffer the whole Will of God.

8. But what is the *perfect work* of Patience? Is it any thing less than the *perfect Love of God*, constraining us to love every soul of man, "even as Christ loved us?" Is it not the whole of Religion, the whole "Mind which was also in Christ Jesus?" Is it not the "renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created us?" And is not the fruit of this, the constant resignation of ourselves, body and spirit to God: entirely giving up all we are, all we have, and all we love, as a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God through the Son of his love? It seems this is the *perfect work of patience*, consequent upon the trial of our faith.

9. But how does this work differ from that gracious work which is wrought in every believer, when he first finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the remission of his sins? Many persons that are not only upright of heart, but that fear, nay, and love God, have not spoken warily upon this head, not according to the Oracles of God. They have spoken of the work of sanctification, taking the word in its full sense, as if it were quite of another kind,

as if it differed entirely from that which is wrought in justification. But this is a great and dangerous mistake, and has a natural tendency to make us undervalue that glorious work of God, which was wrought in us, when we were justified: whereas, in that moment when we were justified freely by his grace, when we are accepted through the Beloved, we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit. And there is as great a change wrought in our souls, when we are born of the Spirit, as was wrought in our bodies when we were born of a woman. There is, in that hour, a general change, from inward sinfulness, to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are, in that instant, changed by the mighty power of God, into heavenly desires. The whirlwind of our Will is stopped in its mid career, and sinks down into the Will of God. Pride and haughtiness subside into lowliness of heart: as do anger, with all turbulent and unruly passions, into calmness, meekness, and gentleness. In a word, the earthly, sensual, devilish mind, gives place to "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

10. "Well, but what more than this can be implied in entire sanctification?" It does not imply any new *kind* of holiness: let no man imagine this. From the moment we are justified, till we give up our spirits to God, Love is the fulfilling of the Law: of the whole evangelical Law, which took place of the Adamic Law, when the first promise of *the Seed of the Woman* was made. Love is the sum of Christian Sanctification; it is the one *kind* of holiness, which is found, only in various *degrees*, in the believers who are distinguished by St. John into "little children, young men, and fathers." The difference betwen one and the other, properly lies in the degree of love. And herein there is as great a difference in the spiritual, as in the natural sense, between fathers, young men, and babes.

Every one that is born of God, though he be as yet only

a "babe in Christ," has the love of God in his heart, the love of his neighbour, together with lowliness, meekness, and resignation. But all of these are then in a low degree, in proportion to the degree of his faith. The faith of a babe in Christ is weak, generally mingled with doubts or fears; with doubts, whether he has not deceived himself; or fears, that he shall not endure to the end. And if, in order to prevent these perplexing doubts, or to remove these tormenting fears, he catches hold of the opinion, that a true believer cannot *make shipwreck of the faith*, experience will sooner or later shew, that it is merely the staff of a broken reed, which will be so far from sustaining him, that it will only enter into his hand and pierce it. But to return. In the same proportion as he grows in faith, he grows in holiness: he increases in love, lowliness, meekness, in every part of the image of God; till it pleases God, after he is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away, to purify his heart and cleanse him from all unrighteousness; to fulfil that promise which he made first to his ancient people, and in them to the Israel of God in all ages, "I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."

It is not easy to conceive what a difference there is, between that which he experiences now, and that which he experienced before. Till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was mixed. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride: He was meek, but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently damped, by the love of some creature: the love of his neighbour, by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into the Will of God; but although in general he could say, "I come *not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me*," yet now and then nature rebelled, and he could not clearly say, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt." His whole soul is now consistent with

itself: there is no jarring string. All his passions flow in a continual stream, with an even tenor to God. To him that is entered into this rest, you may truly say,

"Calm thou ever art within,
All unruffled, all serene!"

There is no mixture of any contrary affections: all is peace and harmony after. Being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it, than of the beating of his heart, and continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, he rejoices evermore. He converses continually with the God whom he loves, unto whom in every thing he gives thanks. And as he now loves God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, so Jesus now reigns alone in his heart, the Lord of every motion there.

11. But it may be enquired, In what manner does God work this entire, this universal change in the soul of a believer? This strange work, which so many will not believe, though we declare it unto them? Does he work it gradually, by slow degrees? or instantaneously, in a moment? How many are the disputes upon this head, even among the children of God! And so there will be, after all that ever was, or ever can be said upon it. For many will still say, with the famous Jew, "Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris:" that is, "Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou dost persuade me." And they will be the more resolute herein, because the Scriptures are silent upon the subject; because the point is not determined, at least, not in express terms, in any part of the Oracles of God. Every man, therefore, may abound in his own sense, provided he will not be angry at those who differ from his opinion, nor entertain hard thoughts concerning them. Permit me, likewise, to add one thing more. Be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory.

12. This premised, in order to throw what light I can upon this interesting question, I will simply relate what I

have seen myself in the course of many years. Four or five and forty years ago, when I had no distinct views of what the Apostle meant, by exhorting us to "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection;" two or three persons in London, whom I knew to be truly sincere, desired to give me an account of their experience. It appeared exceedingly strange, being different from any that I had heard before: but exactly similar to the preceding account of entire sanctification. The next year, two or three more persons at Bristol, and two or three in Kingswood, coming to me severally, gave me exactly the same account of their experience. A few years after, I desired all those in London, who made the same profession, to come to me all together at the Foundery, that I might be thoroughly satisfied. I desired that man of God, Thomas Walsh, to give us the meeting there. When we met, first one of us, and then the other, asked them the most searching questions we could devise. They answered every one without hesitation, and with the utmost simplicity, so that we were fully persuaded, they did not deceive themselves. In the years 1759, 1760, 1761, and 1762, their numbers multiplied exceedingly, not only in London and Bristol, but in various parts of Ireland as well as England. Not trusting to the testimony of others, I carefully examined most of these myself: and in London alone, I found six hundred and fifty-two members of our Society, who were exceedingly clear in their experience, and of whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt. I believe no year has passed since that time, wherein God has not wrought the same work in many others; but sometimes in one part of England or Ireland, sometimes in another; as "the wind bloweth where it listeth:" and every one of these, (after the most careful enquiry, I have not found one exception either in Great Britain or Ireland,) has declared that his deliverance from sin was *instantaneous*, that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one third, or one in twenty, declared it was *gradually* wrought in *them*, I should have believed this, with regard

to *them*, and thought that *some* were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus: as all who believe they are sanctified, declare with one voice, that the change was wrought in a moment; I cannot but believe, that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an *instantaneous* work.

13. But however that question be decided, whether sanctification, in the full sense of the word, be wrought instantaneously or gradually, how may *we* attain to it? "What shall we do," said the Jews to our Lord, "that we may work the works of God?" His answer will suit those that ask, What shall we do, that this work of God may be wrought in us? "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." On this one work all the others depend. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, are engaged on thy side. In this, as in all other instances, "by grace we are saved through faith." Sanctification too is "not of works, lest any man should boast." "It is the gift of God," and is to be received by plain, simple faith. Suppose you are now labouring to "abstain from all appearance of evil, zealous of good works," and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is then only one point remaining: the voice of God to your soul is, "Believe, and be saved."* First, Believe that God has promised to save you from all sin, and to fill you with all holiness. Secondly, Believe that he is *able* thus "to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God through him." Thirdly, Believe that he is *willing*, as well as able, to save *you* to the uttermost; to purify you from all sin, and fill up all your heart with love. Believe, fourthly, that he is not only able, but willing to do it *now!* Not when you come to die; not at any distant time; not to-morrow, but *to-day*. He will then enable you to believe, *it is done*, according to his word. And then "patience shall have its

* See the Sermon on *The Way of Salvation*.

perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

14. Ye shall then be *perfect*. The Apostle seems to mean by this expression, τελειοι, Ye shall be wholly delivered from every evil work, from every evil word, from every sinful thought: yea, from every evil desire, passion, temper, from all inbred corruption, from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin: and ye shall be renewed in the spirit of your mind, in every right temper, after the image of him that created you, in righteousness and true holiness. Ye shall be *entire*, ολοκληροι· (the same word which the Apostle uses to the Christians in Thessalonica.) This seems to refer, not so much to the kind, as to the degree of holiness: as if he had said, "Ye shall enjoy as high a degree of holiness, as is consistent with your present state of pilgrimage." And ye shall *want nothing;* the Lord being your Shepherd, your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, your God, and your All, will feed you with the bread of heaven, and give you meat enough. He will lead you forth beside the waters of comfort, and *keep you every moment:* so that loving him with all your heart, (which is the sum of all perfection,) you will "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks," till "an abundant entrance is ministered unto you, into his everlasting kingdom!"

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION.

MATTHEW XVI. 26.

"What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?"

1. THERE is a celebrated remark to this effect, (I think in the Works of Mr. Pascal,) That if a man of low estate would speak of high things, as of what relates to kings or kingdoms, it is not easy for him to find suitable expressions, as he is so little acquainted with things of this nature. But if one of royal parentage speak of royal things, of what concerns his own or his father's kingdom, his language will be free and easy, as these things are familiar to his thoughts. In like manner, if a mere inhabitant of this lower world speak concerning the great things of the kingdom of God, hardly is he able to find expressions suitable to the greatness of the subject. But when the Son of God speaks of the highest things, which concern his heavenly kingdom, all his language is easy and unlaboured, his words natural and unaffected: inasmuch as known unto him are all these things from all eternity.

2. How strongly is this remark exemplified in the passage now before us! The Son of God, the great King of heaven and earth, here uses the plainest and easiest words: but how high and deep are the things which he expresses

therein? None of the children of men can fully conceive them, till emerging out of the darkness of the present world, he commences an inhabitant of eternity.

3. But we may conceive a little of these deep things, if we consider, First, What is implied in that expression, a man's *gaining the whole world:* Secondly, What is implied in *losing his own soul:* We shall then, Thirdly, see in the strongest light, *What* he is *profited*, who *gains the whole world*, and *loses his own soul.*

I. 1. We are, first, to consider, What is implied in a man's *gaining the whole world.* Perhaps, at the first hearing, this may seem to some equivalent with conquering the whole world. But it has no relation thereto at all: and indeed that expression involves a plain absurdity. For it is impossible, any that is born of a woman should ever conquer the whole world; were it only because the short life of man could not suffice for so wild an undertaking. Accordingly, no man ever did conquer the half, no, nor the tenth part of the world. But whatever others might do, there was no danger that any of our Lord's hearers should have any thought of this. Among all the sins of the Jewish nation, the desire of universal empire was not found. Even in their most flourishing times, they never sought to extend their conquests beyond the river Euphrates. And in our Lord's time, all their ambition was at an end: "the sceptre was departed from Judah:" and Judea was governed by a Roman Procurator, as a branch of the Roman Empire.

2. Leaving this, we may find a far more easy and natural sense of the expression. To gain the whole world, may properly enough imply, to gain all the pleasures which the world can give. The man we speak of, may, therefore, be supposed to have gained all that will gratify his senses. In particular, all that can increase his pleasure of tasting, all the elegancies of meat and drink. Likewise, whatever can gratify his smell, or touch: all that he can enjoy in common with his fellow-brutes. He may have all the plenty and all the variety of these objects which the world can afford.

3. We may farther suppose him to have gained all that gratifies "the desire of the eyes;" whatever (by means of the eye chiefly) conveys any pleasure to the imagination. The pleasures of the imagination arise from three sources, grandeur, beauty, and novelty. Accordingly, we find by experience, our own imagination is gratified by surveying either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon objects. Let him be encompassed then with the most grand, the most beautiful, and the newest things that can any where be found. For all this is manifestly implied in a man's gaining the whole world.

4. But there is also another thing implied herein, which men of the most elevated spirits have preferred before all the pleasures of sense and of imagination put together; that is, honour, glory, and renown:

Virum volitare per ora.

It seems, that hardly any principle of the human mind is of greater force than this. It triumphs over the strongest propensities of nature, over all our appetites and affections. If Brutus sheds the blood of his own children; if we see another Brutus in spite of every possible obligation, in defiance of all justice and gratitude,

"Cringing while he stabs his friend;"

if a far greater man than either of these, Paschal Paoli, gave up ease, pleasure, every thing, for a life of constant toil, pain, and alarms: what principle could support them? They might talk of *amor patriæ*, the love of their country; but this would never have carried them through, had there not been also the

Laudum immensa cupido;

the immense thirst of *praise*. Now the man we speak of, has gained abundance of this; he is praised, if not admired, by all that are round about him. Nay, his name is gone forth into distant lands, as it were, to the ends of the earth.

5. Add to this, that he has gained abundance of wealth; that there is no end of his treasures; that he has laid up silver as the dust, and gold as the sand of the sea. Now when

a man has obtained all these pleasures, all that will gratify either the senses or the imagination; when he has gained an honourable name, and also laid up much treasure for many years: then he may be said, in an easy, natural sense of the word, to have *gained the whole world.*

II. 1. The next point we have to consider is, What is implied in a man's "losing his own soul?" But here we draw a deeper scene, and have need of a more steady attention. For it is easy to sum up all in a man's "gaining the whole world." But it is not easy to understand all that is implied in his "losing his own soul." Indeed, none can fully conceive this, until he has passed through time into eternity.

2. The first thing which it undeniably implies, is the losing all the present pleasures of religion; all those which it affords to truly religious men, even in the present life. "If there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love," in the love of God, and of all mankind; if any "joy in the Holy Ghost;" if there be a peace of God, a peace that passeth all understanding; if there be any rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience toward God; it is manifest, all this is totally lost, by the man that loses his own soul.

3. But the present life will soon be at an end: we know it passes away like a shadow. The hour is at hand, when the spirit will be summoned to return to God that gave it. In that awful moment,

> "Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
> Who stand upon the threshold of the new."

And whether he looks backward or forward, how pleasing is the prospect to him that saves his soul! If he look back, he has "The calm remembrance of a life well spent." If he look forward, there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and he sees the convoy of angels ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom. But how is it in that solemn hour, with the man that *loses* his

soul? Does he look back? What comfort is there in this? He sees nothing but scenes of horror, matter of shame, remorse, and self-condemnation, a foretaste of "the worm that never dieth." If he look forward, what does he see? No joy, no peace! No gleam of hope from any point of heaven! Some years since, one who turned back as a dog to his vomit, was struck in his mad career of sin. A friend visiting him, prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon those who are just stepping out of the body, and know not which shall meet them at their entrance into the other world, an angel or a fiend." The sick man shrieked out with a piercing cry, "A fiend! a fiend!" and died. Just such an end, unless he die like an ox, may any man expect, who loses his own soul.

4. But in what situation is the spirit of a good man, at his entrance into eternity? See,

— — — — "The convoy attends,
The ministering host of invisible friends:"

They receive the new-born spirit, and conduct him safe into Abraham's Bosom, into the delights of Paradise, the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines. It is but one of a thousand commendations of this anti-chamber of heaven, That "there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest." For there they have numberless sources of happiness, which they could not have upon earth. There they meet with "the glorious dead of ancient days." They converse with Adam, first of men; with Noah, first of the new world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses and the Prophets; with the Apostles of the Lamb; with the saints of all ages; and above all, they *are with Christ.*

5. How different, alas! is the case with him who loses his own soul! The moment he steps into eternity, he meets with the devil and his angels. Sad convoy into the world of spirits! Sad earnest of what is to come! And either he is bound with chains of darkness, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day; or, at best, he wan-

ders up and down, seeking rest, but finding none. Perhaps he may seek it (like the "unclean spirit cast out of the man") in dry, dreary, desolate places: perhaps

"Where Nature all in ruins lies,
And owns her sov'reign, Death."

And little comfort can he find here! seeing every thing contributes to increase, not remove the fearful expectation of fiery indignation, which will devour the ungodly.

6. For even this is to him but the beginning of sorrows. Yet a little while, and he will see "the great white Throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them." And "the dead, small and great, stand before God, and are judged, every one according to his works." "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand," (God grant he may say so to YOU!) "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the angels shall tune their harps and sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in." And then shall they "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

7. How different will be the lot of him that loses his own soul! No joyful sentence will be pronounced on him, but one that will pierce him through with unutterable horror, (God forbid, that ever it should be pronounced on any of you that are here before God!) "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" And who can doubt, but those infernal spirits will immediately execute the sentence, will instantly drag those forsaken of God into their own place of torment! Into those

"Regions of sorrow, doleful shades; where peace
And rest can never dwell! Hope never comes,
That comes to all,"———

all the children of men who are on this side eternity. But not to them: the gulf is now fixed, over which they cannot pass. From the moment wherein they are once plunged

into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, their torments are not only without intermission, but likewise without end. For "they have no rest, day or night; but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever!"

III. Upon ever so cursory a view of these things, would not any one be astonished, that a man, that a creature endued with reason, should voluntarily choose; I say *choose;* for God forces no man into inevitable damnation: he never yet

"Consign'd one unborn soul to hell,
Or damn'd him from his mother's womb;"

should choose thus to lose his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world! For what shall a man be profited thereby, upon the whole of the account?

But a little to abate our astonishment at this, let us observe the suppositions which a man generally makes, before he can reconcile himself to this fatal choice.

1. He supposes, first, "That a life of religion is a life of misery." That religion is misery! How is it possible, that any one should entertain so strange a thought? Do any of *you* imagine this? If you do, the reason is plain; you know not what religion is. "No! But I do, as well as you."—What is it then? "Why, the doing no harm." Not so: many birds and beasts do no harm; yet they are not capable of religion. "Then it is going to Church and Sacrament." Indeed it is not. This may be an excellent help to religion; and every one who desires to save his soul, should attend them at all opportunities: yet it is possible, you may attend them all your days, and still have no religion at all. Religion is a higher and deeper thing than any outward ordinance whatever.

2. "What is religion then?" It is easy to answer, if we consult the oracles of God. According to these, it lies in one single point: it is neither more nor less than Love: it is love which "is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Religion is the love of God and our neighbour; that is, every man under heaven. This love

ruling the whole life, animating all our tempers and passions, directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, is "pure religion and undefiled."

3. Now will any one be so hardy as to say, that love is misery? Is it misery to love God? to give him my heart, who alone is worthy of it? Nay, it is the truest happiness, indeed, the only true happiness which is to be found under the sun. So does all experience prove the justness of that reflection which was made long ago, "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, until it resteth in thee." Or does any one imagine, the love of our neighbour is misery, even the loving every man as our own soul? So far from it, that next to the love of God, this affords the greatest happiness of which we are capable. Therefore,

"Let not the Stoic boast his mind unmov'd,
The brute-philosopher, who ne'er has prov'd
The joy of loving, or of being lov'd."

4. So much every reasonable man must allow. But he may object, "There is more than this implied in religion. It implies not only the love of God and man, (against which I have no objection,) but also a great deal of doing and suffering. And how can this be consistent with happiness?"

There is certainly some truth in this objection. Religion does imply both doing and suffering. Let us then calmly consider, whether this impairs or heightens our happiness.

Religion implies, first, the doing many things. For the love of God will naturally lead us, at all opportunities, to converse with him we love: to speak to him in (public or private) prayer, and to hear the words of his mouth, which "are dearer to us than thousands of gold and silver." It will incline us to lose no opportunity of receiving

"The dear memorials of our dying Lord:"

to continue instant in thanksgiving; at morning, evening, and noon-day to praise him. But suppose we do all this, will it lessen our happiness? Just the reverse. It is plain, all these fruits of love are means of increasing the love from

which they spring; and of consequence they increase our happiness in the same proportion. Who then would not join in that wish,

"Rising to sing my Saviour's praise,
Thee may I publish all day long:
And let thy precious word of grace
Flow from my heart, and fill my tongue;
Fill all my life with purest love,
And join me to thy church above!"

5. It must also be allowed, that as the love of God naturally leads to works of piety, so the love of our neighbour naturally leads all that feel it, to works of mercy. It inclines us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit them that are sick or in prison; to be as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; an husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. But can you suppose, that the doing this will prevent or lessen your happiness? Yea, though you did so much, as to be like a guardian angel to all that are round about you? On the contrary, it is an infallible truth, that

——— "All worldly joys are less
Than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

A man of pleasure was asked some years ago, "Captain, what was the greatest pleasure you ever had?" After a little pause he replied, "When we were upon our march in Ireland, in a very hot day, I called at a cabin on the road, and desired a little water. The woman brought me a cup of milk. I gave her a piece of silver; and the joy that poor creature expressed, gave me the greatest pleasure I ever had in my life." Now, if the doing good gave so much pleasure to one who acted merely from natural generosity, how much more must it give to one who does it on a nobler principle, the joint love of God and his neighbour? It remains, that the doing all which religion requires, will not lessen, but immensely increase our happiness.

6. "Perhaps this also may be allowed. But religion implies, according to the Christian account, not only doing,

but *suffering*. And how can suffering be consistent with happiness?" Perfectly well. Many centuries ago, it was remarked by St. Chrysostom, "The Christian has his sorrows, as well as his joys: but his sorrow is sweeter than joy." He may accidentally suffer loss, poverty, pain: but in all these things, he is more than conqueror: He can testify,

> "Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
> While thou, my God, art here."

He can say, "The Lord gave; the Lord taketh away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!" He must suffer, more or less, reproach: for "the servant is not above his Master;" but so much the more does the Spirit of Glory and of Christ rest upon him. Yea, love itself will on several occasions be the source of suffering: The love of God will frequently produce

> ——— "The pleasing smart,
> The meltings of a broken heart."

And the love of our neighbour will give rise to sympathizing sorrow: it will lead us to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; to be tenderly concerned for the distressed, and to "mix our pitying tear with those that weep." But may we not well say, these are "Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven?" So far, then, are all these sufferings from either preventing or lessening our happiness, that they greatly contribute thereto, and indeed constitute no inconsiderable part of it. So that, upon the whole, there cannot be a more false supposition, than that a life of religion is a life of misery; seeing true religion, whether considered in its nature or its fruits, is true and solid happiness.

7. The man who chooses to gain the world by the loss of his soul, supposes, secondly, "That a life of wickedness is a life of happiness!" That wickedness is happiness! Even an old heathen poet could have taught him better. Even Juvenal discovered, *Nemo malus felix:* No wicked man is

happy! And how expressly does God himself declare, "There is no peace to the wicked:" no peace of mind; and without this, there can be no happiness.

But not to avail ourselves of authority, let us weigh the thing in the balance of reason. I ask, What can make a wicked man happy? You answer, He has gained the whole world. We allow it, and what does this imply? He has gained all that gratifies the senses: in particular, all that can please the taste: all the delicacies of meat and drink. True; but can eating and drinking make a man happy? They never did yet; and certain it is, they never will. This is too coarse food for an immortal spirit. But suppose it did give him a poor kind of happiness, during those moments wherein he was swallowing; what will he do with the residue of his time? will it not hang heavily upon his hands? Will he not groan under many a tedious hour, and think swift-winged time flies too slow? If he be not fully employed, will he not frequently complain of lowness of spirits? An unmeaning expression, which the miserable physician usually no more understands, than his miserable patient. We know, there are such things as nervous disorders. But we know likewise, that what is commonly called *nervous lowness*, is a secret reproof from God, a kind of consciousness, that we are not in our place; that we are not as God would have us to be; we are unhinged from our proper centre.

8. To remove, or at least soothe this strange uneasiness, let him add the pleasures of imagination. Let him bedaub himself with silver and gold, and adorn himself with all the colours of the rainbow. Let him build splendid palaces, and furnish them in the most elegant, as well as costly manner. Let him lay out walks and gardens, beautified with all that nature and art can afford. And how long will these give him pleasure? Only as long as they are new. As soon as ever the novelty is gone, the pleasure is gone also. After he has surveyed them a few months, or years, they give him no more satisfaction. The man who is saving

his soul, has the advantage of him in this very respect. For he can say,

"In the pleasures the rich man's possessions display,
Unenvy'd I challenge my part;
While every fair object my eye can survey,
Contributes to gladden my heart."

9. "However, he has yet another resource: *Applause, Glory*. And will not this make him happy?" It will not: for he cannot be applauded by all men; no man ever was. Some will praise: perhaps many; but not all. It is certain some will blame: and he that is fond of applause, will feel more pain from the censure of one, than pleasure from the praise of many. So that whoever seeks happiness in applause, will infallibly be disappointed, and will find, upon the whole of the account, abundantly more pain than pleasure.

10. But to bring the matter to a short issue. Let us take an instance of one, who had gained more of this world than probably any man now alive, unless he be a sovereign prince. But did all he had gained, make him happy? Answer for thyself. Then said Haman, Yet "all this profiteth me nothing, while I see Mordecai sitting in the gate." Poor Haman! One unholy temper, whether pride, envy, jealousy, or revenge, gave him more pain, more vexation of spirit, than all the world could give him pleasure. And so it must be in the nature of things; for all unholy tempers are unhappy tempers. Ambition, covetousness, vanity, inordinate affection, malice, revengefulness, carry their own punishment with them, and avenge themselves on the soul wherein they dwell. Indeed what are these, more especially when they are combined with an awakened conscience, but the dogs of hell, already gnawing the soul, forbidding happiness to approach! Did not even the Heathens see this? What else means their fable of Tityus, chained to a rock with a vulture continually tearing up his breast, and feeding upon his liver? *Quid rides?* Why do you smile? Says the Poet;

——Mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.

It is another name. But thou art the man! Lust, foolish desire, envy, malice, or anger, is now tearing thy breast: love of money, or of praise, hatred, or revenge, is now feeding on thy poor spirit. Such happiness is in vice! So vain is the supposition that a life of wickedness is a life of happiness!

11. But he makes a third supposition, "That he shall certainly live forty, or fifty, or threescore years." Do *you* depend upon this? on living threescore years? Who told you that you should? It is no other than the enemy of God and man: it is the murderer of souls. Believe him not; he was a liar from the beginning; from the beginning of his rebellion against God. He is eminently a liar in this; for he would not give you life, if he could. Would God permit, he would make sure work, and just now hurry you to his own place. And he cannot give you life, if he would: the breath of man is not in his hands. He is not the disposer of life and death: that power belongs to the Most High. It is possible indeed, God may, on some occasions, permit him to inflict death. I do not know, but it was an evil angel who smote an hundred, fourscore and five thousand Assyrians in one night: and the fine lines of our poet are as applicable to an evil, as to a good spirit:

"So when an angel by divine command,
Hurls death and terror o'er a guilty land:—
He, pleas'd the Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

But though Satan may sometimes inflict death, I know not that he could ever give life. It was one of his most faithful servants, that shrieked out some years ago, "A week's life! A week's life! Thirty thousand pounds for a week's life!" But he could not purchase a day's life. That night God required his soul of him! And how soon may he require it of you? Are you sure of living threescore years? Are you sure of living one year? one week? one day? O make haste to live! Surely the man that may die to-night, should live to-day.

12. So absurd are all the suppositions made by him, who

gains the world, and loses his soul! But let us for a moment imagine, that wickedness is happiness, and that he shall certainly live threescore years; and still I would ask, "What is he profited," if he gain the whole world for threescore years, and then lose his soul eternally?

Can such a choice be made by any that considers what eternity is? Philip Melancthon, the most learned of all the German Reformers, gives the following relation. (I pass no judgment upon it, but set it down nearly in his own words.) "When I was at Wirtemberg, as I was walking out one summer-evening with several of my fellow-students, we heard an uncommon singing, and following the sound, saw a bird of an uncommon figure. One stepping up, asked, In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what art thou? It answered, I am a damned spirit: and in vanishing away, pronounced these words, O Eternity, Eternity! who can tell the length of Eternity!" And how soon would this be the language of him, who sold his soul for threescore years' pleasure! How soon would he cry out, "O Eternity, Eternity! who can tell the length of Eternity!"

13. In how striking a manner is this illustrated by one of the ancient fathers! Supposing there was a ball of sand as big as the whole earth. Suppose a grain of this to be annihilated in a thousand years: which would be more eligible, to be happy, while this ball was wasting away at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, and miserable ever after? Or to be miserable, while it was wasting away at that proportion, and happy ever after?" A wise man, it is certain, could not pause one moment upon the choice; seeing all that time wherein this ball would be wasting away, bears infinitely less proportion to eternity, than a drop of water to the whole ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole mass. Allowing, then, that a life of religion were a life of misery, that a life of wickedness were a life of happiness, and that a man were assured of enjoying that happiness for a term of threescore years: yet what would he be profited, if he were then to be miserable to all eternity?

14. But it has been proved, that the case is quite otherwise; That religion is happiness, that wickedness is misery, and that no man is assured of living threescore days: and if so, is there any fool, any madman under heaven, who can be compared to him that casts away his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world? For what is the real state of the case? What is the choice which God proposes to his creatures? It is not, "Will you be happy threescore years, and then miserable for ever: or, will you be miserable threescore years, and then happy for ever?" It is not, "Will you have first a temporary heaven, and then hell eternal: or, will you have first a temporary hell, and then heaven eternal?" But it is simply this: Will you be miserable threescore years, and miserable ever after: or, Will you be happy threescore years, and happy ever after? Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever; or, will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever? Will you have two hells, or two heavens?

15. One would think, there needed no great sagacity to answer this question. And this is the very question which I now propose to you in the name of God. Will you be happy here and hereafter, in the world that now is, and in that which is to come? Or will you be miserable here and hereafter, in time and in eternity? What is your choice? Let there be no delay: now take one or the other. I take heaven and earth to record this day, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. O choose life! The life of peace and love now; the life of glory for ever. By the grace of God now choose that better part, which shall never be taken from you. And having once fixed your choice, never draw back: adhere to it at all events. Go on in the name of the Lord, whom ye have chosen, and in the power of his might! In spite of all opposition, from nature, from the world, from all the powers of darkness, still fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life! And then there is laid up for you a crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give you at that day!

SERMON XC.

ON WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION.

PHILIPPIANS II. 12, 13.

"*Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; for it is* GOD *that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good Pleasure.*"

1. SOME great Truths, as the Being and Attributes of God, and the difference between moral Good and Evil, were known, in some measure, to the Heathen world; the traces of them are to be found in all nations: so that, in some sense, it may be said to every child of man, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." With this truth he has, in some measure, "enlightened every one that cometh into the world." And hereby they that "have not the law," that have no written law, "are a law unto themselves." They shew "the work of the law," the substance of it, though not the letter, "written in their hearts," by the same hand which wrote the commandments on the tables of stone: "their conscience also bearing them witness," whether they act suitably thereto or not.

2. But there are two grand heads of doctrine, which contain many truths of the most important nature, of which the most enlightened Heathens in the ancient world were totally ignorant; as are also the most intelligent Heathens,

that are now on the face of the earth: I mean those which relate to the eternal SON of GOD; and the SPIRIT of GOD; to the Son, giving himself to be "a propitiation for the sins of the world;" and to the Spirit of God, renewing men in that image of God wherein they were created. For after all the pains which ingenious and learned men have taken, that great man, Chevalier Ramsay, in particular, to find some resemblance of these truths, in the immense rubbish of Heathen Authors, the resemblance is so exceedingly faint, as not to be discerned but by a very lively imagination. Beside that, even this resemblance, faint as it is, is only to be found in the discourses of a very few, and those were the most improved and deeply thinking men, in their several generations: while the innumerable multitudes that surrounded them, were little better for the knowledge of the Philosophers; but remained as totally ignorant even of these capital truths, as were the beasts that perish.

3. Certain it is that these truths were never known to the vulgar, the bulk of mankind, to the generality of men in any nation, till they were brought to light by the Gospel. Notwithstanding a spark of knowledge glimmering here and there, the whole earth was covered with darkness, till the Sun of Righteousness arose and scattered the shades of night. Since this Day-Spring from on high has appeared, a great light hath shined unto those, who, till then, sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And thousands of them, in every age, have known, "that God so loved the world, as to give his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." And being entrusted with the Oracles of God, they have known that "God hath also given us his Holy Spirit," who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

4. How remarkable are those words of the Apostle, which precede these? "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God," the incommunicable nature of God from eternity, "counted

it no act of robbery," (that is the precise meaning of the word,) no invasion of any other's prerogative; but his own unquestionable right, "to be equal with God." The word implies both the *fulness* and the supreme *height* of the Godhead. To which are opposed the two words, he *emptied*, and he *humbled himself*. He "emptied himself" of that divine fulness, veiled his fulness from the eyes of men and angels, "taking," and by that very act emptying himself, "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man," a real man, like other men. "And being found in fashion as a man," without any peculiar beauty or excellency, "he humbled himself" to a still greater degree, "becoming obedient" to God, though equal with him, "even unto death, yea, the death of the cross," the greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience.

Having proposed the example of Christ, the Apostle exhorts them to secure the salvation which Christ had purchased for them; "Wherefore, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In these comprehensive words we may observe,

I. That grand Truth, which ought never to be out of our remembrance, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

II. The Improvement we ought to make of it, "Work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling."

III. The Connexion between them: "It is God that worketh in you: therefore, work out your own Salvation."

I. 1. First, we are to observe that great and important truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance, "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The meaning of these words may be made more plain, by a small transposition of them. "It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do." This position of the words, connecting the phrase *of his good pleasure* with the word *worketh*, removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole

glory of his work. Otherwise we might have had some room for boasting, as if it were our own desert, some goodness in us, or some good thing done by us, which first moved God to work. But this expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and clearly shews, his motive to work lay wholly in himself: in his own mere grace, in his unmerited mercy.

2. It is by this alone he is impelled to work in man both to will and to do. The expression is capable of two interpretations; both of which are unquestionably true. First, *To will*, may include the whole of inward; *to do*, the whole of outward religion. And if it be thus understood, it implies, That it is God that worketh both inward and outward holiness. Secondly, *To will*, may imply every good desire; *to do*, whatever results therefrom. And then the sentence means, God breathes into us every good desire, and brings every good desire to good effect.

3. The original words το θελειν and το ενεργειν, seem to favour the latter construction: το θελειν, which we render *to will*, plainly including every good desire, whether relating to our tempers, words, or actions; to inward or outward holiness. And το ενεργειν, which we render *to do*, manifestly implies all that power from on high, all that energy which works in us every right disposition, and then furnishes us for every good word and work.

4. Nothing can so directly tend to hide pride from man, as a deep, lasting conviction of this. For if we are thoroughly sensible, that we have nothing which we have not received, how can we glory as if we had not received it. If we know and feel, that the very first motion of good is from above, as well as the power which conducts it to the end: if it is God that not only infuses every good desire, but that accompanies and follows it, else it vanishes away; then it evidently follows, that "he who glorieth must glory in the Lord."

II. 1. Proceed we now to the second point. If God *worketh in you*, then *work out your own salvation*. The

original word, *Work out*, implies the doing a thing thoroughly. *Your own*—for you yourselves must do this, or it will be left undone for ever. Your *own salvation*:—Salvation begins with what is usually termed, (and very properly,) *Preventing Grace*; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight, transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by *Convincing Grace*, usually in Scripture termed *Repentance*, which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian Salvation, whereby *through grace*, we *are saved by faith*, consisting of those two grand branches, Justification and Sanctification. By Justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God: by Sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shew this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard-seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds, but" afterwards "puts forth large branches," and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into him that is our head," till we "attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. But how are we to *work out* this salvation? The Apostle answers, *With fear and trembling*. There is another passage of St. Paul wherein the same expression occurs, which may give light to this. "Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh," according to the present state of things, although sensible that in a little time, the

servant will be free from his master, "with fear and trembling." This is a proverbial expression, which cannot be understood literally. For what master could bear, much less require his servant, to stand trembling and quaking before him? And the following words utterly exclude this meaning: "In singleness of heart," with a single eye to the Will and Providence of God, "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart:" doing whatever they do as the will of God, and, therefore, with their might, Eph. vi. 5, &c. It is easy to see, that these strong expressions of the Apostle clearly imply two things: First, that every thing be done with the utmost earnestness of spirit, and with all care and caution; (perhaps more directly referring to the former word, μετα φοβυ, *with fear.*) Secondly, that it be done with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness: not improbably referring to the latter word, μετα τρομυ, *with trembling*.

3. How easily may we transfer this to the business of life, the working out our own salvation? With the same temper, and in the same manner, that Christian servants serve their masters that are upon earth, let other Christians labour to serve their Master that is in heaven: that is, First, with the utmost earnestness of spirit, with all possible care and caution; and, Secondly, with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness.

4. But what are the steps which the Scriptures direct us to take, in the working out of our own salvation? The Prophet Isaiah gives us a general answer, touching the first steps which we are to take, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." If ever you desire that God should work in you that faith, whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given, flee from all sin as from the face of a serpent: carefully avoid every evil word and work; yea, abstain from all appearance of evil. And "learn to do well:" be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy: family prayer, and crying to God in secret. Fast in secret, and "your Fa-

ther which seeth in secret, he will reward you openly." "Search the Scriptures:" hear them in public, read them in private, and meditate therein. At every opportunity be a partaker of the Lord's Supper. "Do this in remembrance of him," and he will meet you at his own table. Let your conversation be with the children of God, and see that it "be in grace, seasoned with salt." As ye have time do good unto all men, to their souls and to their bodies. And herein "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It then only remains, that ye deny yourselves and take up your cross daily. Deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood. Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will "go on to perfection;" till "walking in the light as he is in the light," you are enabled to testify, that "he is faithful and just," not only to "forgive your sins, but to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

III. 1. "But (say some) what connection is there between the former and the latter clause of this sentence? Is there not rather a flat opposition, between the one and the other? If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of our working? Does not his working thus supersede the necessity of our working at all? Nay, does it not render our working impracticable, as well as unnecessary? For if we allow that God does all, what is there left for us to do?"

2. Such is the reasoning of flesh and blood. And at first hearing it is exceeding plausible. But it is not solid, as will evidently appear if we consider the matter more deeply. We shall then see there is no opposition between these, "God works, therefore, do ye work:" but on the contrary, the closest connection, and that in two respects. For, first, God works; therefore you *can* work; secondly, God works, therefore you *must* work.

3. First, God worketh in you; therefore, you *can* work:

otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work, it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation. "With man this is impossible," saith our Lord, "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Yea, it is impossible for any man; for any that is born of a woman, unless God work in him. Seeing all men are, by nature, not only sick, but "dead in trespasses and sins," it is not possible for them to do any thing well, till God raises them from the dead. It was impossible for *Lazarus to come forth*, till the Lord had given him life. And it is equally impossible for us, to *come* out of our sins, yea, or to make the least motion toward it, till he who hath all power in heaven and earth, call our dead souls into life.

4. Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, It is God only that must quicken us: for we cannot quicken our own souls. For allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature: there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *Natural Conscience*. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed, *Preventing Grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires, although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Every one has some measure of that Light, some faint glimmering ray, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the grace which he hath.

Therefore, in as much as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of

yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. It is possible for you to "love God, because he has first loved us," and to "walk in love," after the pattern of our great Master. We know, indeed, that word of his to be absolutely true, "Without me, ye can do nothing." But on the other hand, we know, every believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

6. Mean time let us remember, that God has joined these together in the experience of every believer. And, therefore, we must take care, not to imagine they are ever to be put asunder. We must beware of that mock humility, which teacheth us to say, in excuse for our wilful disobedience, "O, I can do nothing:" and stops there, without once naming the grace of God. Pray, think twice. Consider what you say. I hope you wrong yourself. For if it be really true that you can do nothing, then you have no faith. And if you have not faith, you are in a wretched condition: you are not in a state of Salvation. Surely, it is not so. You can do something, through Christ strengthening you. Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.

7. Secondly: God worketh in you; therefore, you *must* work: you must be "workers together with him," (they are the very words of the Apostle) otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this, "Unto him that hath, shall be given: but from him that hath not," that does not improve the grace already given, "shall be taken away what he assuredly hath;" (So the words ought to be rendered.) Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis:* "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." He will not save us, unless we "save ourselves from this untoward generation:" unless we ourselves "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life:" unless we "agonize to enter in at the strait gate," "deny our-

selves, and take up our cross daily," and labour, by every possible means, to "make our own calling and election sure."

8. "Labour" then, Brethren, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." Say with our blessed Lord, though in a somewhat different sense, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In consideration that he still worketh in you, be never "weary in well-doing." Go on, in virtue of the grace of God, preventing, accompanying, and following you, in "the work of faith, in the patience of hope, and the labour of love." "Be ye steadfast and unmoveable; always abounding in the work of the Lord." And "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of his sheep, [Jesus] make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever!"

SERMON XCI.

A CALL TO BACKSLIDERS.

PSALM LXXVII. 7, 8.

"*Will the Lord absent himself for ever? And will he be no more intreated?*

"*Is his Mercy clean gone for ever? And is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore?*"

1. PRESUMPTION is one grand snare of the devil, in which many of the children of men are taken. They so presume upon the Mercy of God, as utterly to forget his Justice. Although he has expressly declared, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," yet they flatter themselves, that in the end, God will be better than his word. They imagine they may live and die in their sins, and, nevertheless, "escape the damnation of hell."

2. But although there are many that are destroyed by *Presumption*, there are still more that perish by *Despair*. I mean, by want of hope; by thinking it impossible that they should escape destruction. Having many times fought against their spiritual enemies, and always been overcome, they lay down their arms; they no more contend, as they have no hope of victory. Knowing by melancholy experience, that they have no power of themselves to help themselves, and having no expectation that God will help them,

they lie down under their burden. They no longer strive; for they suppose it is impossible they should attain.

3. In this case, as in a thousand others, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, but a stranger intermeddleth not with his grief." It is not easy for those to know it, who never felt it. For "who knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him?" Who knoweth, unless by his own experience, what this sort of *wounded spirit* means? Of consequence, there are few that know how to sympathize with them that are under this sore temptation. There are few that have duly considered the case; few that are not deceived by appearances. They see men go on in a course of sin, and take it for granted, it is out of mere presumption: whereas, in reality, it is from the quite contrary principle; it is out of mere despair. Either they have no hope at all, and while that is the case, they do not strive at all: or they have some intervals of hope, and while that lasts, *strive for the mastery*. But that hope soon fails: they then cease to strive, and are *taken captive* of Satan *at his will*.

4. This is frequently the case with those that began to run well, but soon tired in the heavenly road: with those in particular, who once "saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" but afterwards grieved his Holy Spirit, and made shipwreck of the faith. Indeed, many of these rush into sin, as a horse into the battle. They sin with so high a hand, as utterly to quench the Holy Spirit of God: so that he gives them up to their own heart's lusts, and lets them follow their own imaginations. And those who are thus given up may be quite stupid, without either fear, or sorrow, or care; utterly easy and unconcerned about God, or heaven, or hell; to which the god of this world contributes not a little, by blinding and hardening their hearts. But still even these would not be so careless, were it not for despair. The grand reason why they have no sorrow or care, is because they have no hope. They verily believe, they have so provoked God, that "he will be no more intreated."

5. And yet we need not utterly give up even these. We have known some, even of the careless ones, whom God has visited again, and restored to their first love. But we may have much more hope for those backsliders who are not careless, who are still uneasy: those who fain would escape out of the snare of the devil, but think it is impossible. They are fully convinced they cannot save themselves, and believe God *will* not save them. They believe he has irrevocably "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." They fortify themselves in believing this, by abundance of reasons. And unless those reasons are clearly removed, they cannot hope for any deliverance.

It is to relieve those hopeless, helpless souls, that I propose, with God's assistance,

I. To enquire what the chief of those Reasons are, some or other of which induce so many Backsliders to cast away hope, to suppose that God hath *forgotten to be gracious.* And,

II. To give a clear and full Answer to each of those Reasons.

I. I am, first, to enquire, What the chief of those Reasons are, which induce so many backsliders to think that God *hath forgotten to be gracious.* I do not say *all* the reasons: for innumerable are those which either their own evil hearts, or that old serpent will suggest: but the chief of them; those that are most plausible, and, therefore, most common.

1. The first Argument which induces many backsliders to believe that "the Lord will be no more intreated," is drawn from the very reason of the thing: "If, say they, a man rebel against an earthly prince, many times he dies for the first offence, he pays his life for the first transgression. Yet, possibly, if the crime be extenuated by some favourable circumstances, or if strong intercession be made for him, his life may be given him. But if, after a full and free pardon, he were guilty of rebelling a second time, who would dare to intercede for him? He must expect no farther mercy. Now if one rebelling against an earthly king,

after he has been freely pardoned once, cannot with any colour of reason hope to be forgiven a second time: what must be the case of him, that after having been freely pardoned for rebelling against the great King of heaven and earth, rebels against him again? What can be expected, but that 'vengeance will come upon him to the uttermost!'"

II. 1. This argument, drawn from reason, they enforce by several passages of Scripture. One of the strongest of these, is that which occurs in the first Epistle of St. John, v. 16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Hence they argue, "Certainly, *I do not say that he shall pray for it*, is equivalent with, *I say he shall not pray for it.* So the Apostle supposes him that has committed this sin, to be in a desperate state indeed! So desperate that we may not even pray for his forgiveness; we may not ask life for him; and what may we more reasonably suppose to be a sin unto death, than a wilful rebellion after a full and free pardon?"

2. "Consider, Secondly," say they, "Those terrible passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, one of which occurs in the sixth chapter, the other in the tenth. To begin with the latter: "If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance is mine: I will recompence, saith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" ver. 26—31. Now is it not here expressly declared by the Holy

Ghost, that our case is desperate? Is it not declared, that "if after we have received the knowledge of the truth," after we have experimentally known it, "we sin wilfully," which we have undoubtedly done, and that over and over, "there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?"

3. And is not that passage in chapter vi. exactly parallel with this? "It is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost—If they fall away, (*literally*, and have fallen away,) to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame," ver. 4—6.

4. It is true, some are of opinion, that those words, *it is impossible*, are not to be taken literally, as denoting absolute impossibility, but a very great difficulty. But it does not appear that we have any sufficient reason to depart from the literal meaning, as it neither implies any absurdity, nor contradicts any other scriptures. Does not this then, they say, cut off all hope, seeing we have, undoubtedly, "tasted of that heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost?" How is it possible to *renew us again to repentance*, to an entire change both of heart and life? Seeing we *have crucified* to ourselves *the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame!*

5. A yet more dreadful passage, if possible, than this, is that in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him. But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come," ver. 31, 32. Exactly parallel to these are the words of our Lord, which are recited by St. Mark: "Verily I say unto you, all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme. But

he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation," ch. iii. 28, 29.

6. It has been the judgment of some, that all these passages point at one and the same sin; that not only the words of our Lord, but those of St. John, concerning the *sin unto death*, and those of St. Paul, concerning "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace;" all refer to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the only sin that shall never be forgiven. Whether they do or not, it must be allowed that this blasphemy is absolutely unpardonable: and that consequently, for those who have been guilty of this, God "will be no more intreated."

7. To confirm those arguments drawn from Reason and Scripture, they appeal to matter of fact. They ask, "Is it not a fact, that those who fall away from justifying grace, who *make shipwreck of the faith*, that faith whereof cometh present salvation, perish without mercy? How much less can any of those escape, who fall away from sanctifying grace! Who make shipwreck of that faith, whereby they are cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit? Has there ever been an instance of one or the other of these being *renewed again to repentance*? If there be any instances of that, one would be inclined to believe that thought of our Poet not to be extravagant,

"Even Judas struggles his despair to quell,
Hope almost blossoms in the shades of hell."

III. These are the principal arguments drawn from Reason, from Scripture, and from Fact, whereby backsliders, are wont to justify themselves, in casting away hope: in supposing that God hath utterly "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." I have proposed them in their full strength, that we may form the better judgment concerning them, and try whether each of them may not receive a clear, full, satisfactory answer.

1. I begin with that argument which is taken from the nature of the thing, "If a man rebel against an earthly

prince, he may possibly be forgiven the first time. But if, after a full and free pardon, he should rebel again, there is no hope of obtaining a second pardon: he must expect to die without mercy. Now if he that rebels again against an earthly king, can look for no second pardon, how can he look for mercy, who rebels a second time against the great King of heaven and earth!"

2. I answer: this argument drawn from the analogy between earthly and heavenly things, is plausible, but it is not solid: and that for this plain reason, analogy has no place here: there can be no analogy or proportion between the mercy of any of the children of men, and that of the Most High God. "Unto whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord?" Unto whom either in heaven or earth? Who, "what is he among the gods, that shall be compared unto the Lord?" "I have said, Ye are gods," saith the Psalmist, speaking to supreme magistrates. Such is your dignity and power, compared to that of common men. But what are they to the God of heaven? As a bubble upon the wave. What is their power in comparison to his power? What is their mercy compared to his mercy? Hence that comfortable word, "I am God and not man, therefore the house of Israel is not consumed." Because he is God and not man, "therefore his compassions fail not." None then can infer, that because an earthly king will not pardon one that rebels against him a second time, therefore the King of heaven will not! Yea, he will; not until seven times only, or until seventy times seven. Nay, were your rebellions multiplied as the stars of heaven, were they more in number than the hairs of your head: yet "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

3. "But does not St. John cut us off from this hope, by what he says of the *sin unto death?* Is not, *I do not say that he shall pray for it*, equivalent with, *I say he shall not pray for it?* And does not this imply, that God has determined not to hear their prayer? That he will not

give life to such a sinner, no, not through the prayer of a righteous man?"

4. I answer, *I do not say that he shall pray for it*, certainly means, *He shall not pray for it.* And it doubtless implies, that God will not give life unto them that have sinned this sin: that their sentence is passed, and God has determined it shall not be revoked. It cannot be altered even by that "effectual fervent prayer," which, in other cases, "availeth much."

IV. But I ask, first, what is the *sin unto death?* And, secondly, What is the death which is annexed to it?

1. And, first, What is the *sin unto death?* It is now many years since, being among a people the most experienced in the things of God of any I had ever seen, I asked some of them, What do you understand by the *sin unto death*, mentioned in the first Epistle of St. John? They answered, "*If any one is sick among* us, he *sends for the Elders of the Church;* and they pray over him, and the *prayer of faith saves the sick, and the Lord raises him up. And if he hath committed sins*, which God was punishing by that sickness, *they are forgiven him.* But sometimes none of us can pray that God would *raise him up.* And we are constrained to tell him, 'We are afraid that you have sinned *a sin unto death;* a sin which God has determined to punish with death; we cannot pray for your recovery.' And we have never yet known an instance of such a person recovering."

2. I see no absurdity at all in this interpretation of the word. It seems to be one meaning at least, of the expression, *a sin unto death;* a sin which God is determined to punish by the death of the sinner. If, therefore, you have sinned a sin of this kind, and your sin has overtaken you; if God is chastising you by some severe disease, it will not avail to pray for your life; you are irrevocably sentenced to die. But, observe! This has no reference to eternal death. It does by no means imply that you are condemned to die the second death. No; it rather implies the con-

trary; the body is destroyed, that the soul may escape destruction. I have myself, during a course of many years, seen numerous instances of this. I have known many sinners, (chiefly notorious backsliders from high degrees of holiness; and such as had given great occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme,) whom God has cut short in the midst of their journey, yea, before they had lived out half their days. These, I apprehend, had sinned *a sin unto death*; in consequence of which they were cut off, sometimes swiftly, sometimes more slowly, by an unexpected stroke. But in most of these cases it has been observed, that "mercy rejoiced over judgment." And the persons themselves were fully convinced of the goodness as well as justice of God. They acknowledged, that he destroyed the body, in order to save the soul. Before they went hence, he healed their backsliding. So they died, that they might live for ever.

3. A very remarkable instance of this occurred many years ago. A young collier in Kingswood, near Bristol, was an eminent sinner, and afterwards an eminent saint. But by little and little he renewed his acquaintance with his old companions, who, by degrees, wrought upon him, till he dropped all his religion, and was two-fold more a child of hell than before. One day he was working in the pit with a serious young man, who suddenly stopped and cried out, "O Tommy, what a man were you once! How did your words and example provoke many to love and to good works! And what are you now? What would become of you, if you were to die as you are?" "Nay, God forbid," said Thomas, "for then I should fall into hell headlong! O let us cry to God!" They did so for a considerable time, first the one, and then the other. They called upon God with strong cries and tears, wrestling with him in mighty prayer. After some time, Thomas broke out, "Now I know, God hath healed my backsliding. I know again, that my Redeemer liveth, and that he hath washed me from my sins with his own blood. I am willing to go to him." Instantly part of the pit calved in, and

crushed him to death in a moment. Whoever thou art that hast sinned *a sin unto death*, lay this to heart! It may be, God will require thy soul of thee in an hour when thou lookest not for it! But if he doth, there is mercy in the midst of judgment: thou shalt not die eternally.

4. "But what say you to that other scripture, namely, the tenth of the Hebrews? Does that leave any hope to notorious backsliders, that they shall not die eternally: That they can ever recover the favour of God, or escape the damnation of hell? 'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' Law, died without mercy. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

5. And is not the same thing, namely, the desperate, irrecoverable state of wilful backsliders, fully confirmed by that parallel passage in the sixth chapter? 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,—and have fallen away, (so it is in the original,) to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

6. These passages seem to me parallel to each other, and deserve our deepest consideration. And in order to understand them, it will be necessary to know, 1. Who are the persons here spoken of, and, 2. What is the sin they had committed, which made their case nearly, if not quite desperate.

As to the first, it will be clear to all who impartially consider and compare both these passages, that the persons spoken of herein, are those, and those only, that have been justified, that have had the eyes of their understanding opened and *enlightened*, to see the light of the glory of

God, in the face of Jesus Christ. These only *have tasted of the heavenly gift*, remission of sins, eminently so called. These *have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, both of the witness and the fruit of the Spirit. This character cannot, with any propriety, be applied to any but those that have been justified.

And they had been *sanctified* too; at least, in the first degree, as far as all are who receive remission of sins. So the second passage expressly affirms, "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

7. Hence it follows, that this scripture concerns those alone, who have been *justified*, and, at least, in part, *sanctified*. Therefore, all of you, who never were thus *enlightened* with the light of the glory of God; all who never did *taste of the heavenly gift*, who never received remission of sins; all who never *were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, of the witness and fruit of the Spirit; in a word, all you who never were *sanctified* by the blood of the everlasting covenant; you are not concerned here. Whatever other passages of Scripture may condemn you, it is certain, you are not condemned either by the sixth or the tenth of the Hebrews. For both those passages speak wholly and solely of apostates from the faith which you never had. Therefore, it was not possible that you should lose it, for you could not lose what you had not. Therefore, whatever judgments are denounced in these scriptures, they are not denounced against *you*. You are not the persons here described, against whom only they are denounced.

8. Enquire we next, What was the sin which the persons here described were guilty of? In order to understand this, we should remember, that whenever the Jews prevailed on a Christian to apostatize, they required him to declare, in express terms, and that in the public assembly, That Jesus of Nazareth was a deceiver of the people; and that he had suffered no more punishment, than his crimes justly deserved. This is the sin which St. Paul, in the first passage, terms emphatically "falling away; crucifying the

Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame." This is that which he terms in the second, "counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace." Now which of you has thus *fallen away?* Which of you has thus *crucified the Son of God afresh?* Not one: nor has one of you thus *put him to an open shame.* If you had thus formally renounced that only *sacrifice for sin*, there had *no other sacrifice remained;* so that you must have perished without mercy. But this is not your case. Not one of you has thus renounced that sacrifice, by which the Son of God made a full and perfect satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Bad as you are, you shudder at the thought: therefore, that *sacrifice* still remains for you. Come then, cast away your needless fears! "Come boldly to the throne of grace!" The way is still open. You shall again "find mercy and grace to help in time of need."

V. 1. "But do not the well-known words of our Lord himself, cut us off from all hope of mercy? Does he not say, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.' Therefore, it is plain, if we have been guilty of this sin, there is no room for mercy. And is not the same thing repeated by St. Mark, almost in the same words? "Verily I say unto you," (a solemn preface! always denoting the great importance of that which follows:) "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is under the sentence of eternal damnation."

2. How immense is the number in every nation, throughout the Christian world, of those who have been more or less distressed on account of this scripture? What multi-

tudes in this kingdom have been perplexed above measure upon this very account? Nay, there are few that are truly convinced of sin, and seriously endeavour to save their souls, who have not felt some uneasiness, for fear they had committed, or should commit, this unpardonable sin. What has frequently increased their uneasiness was, that they could hardly find any to comfort them. For their acquaintances, even the most religious of them, understood no more of the matter than themselves. And they could not find any writer, who had published any thing satisfactory upon the subject. Indeed in the seven sermons of Mr. Russel, which are common among us, there is one expressly written upon it. But it will give little satisfaction to a troubled spirit. He talks *about it, and about it*, but makes nothing out: he takes much pains, but misses the mark at last.

3. But was there ever in the world a more deplorable proof of the littleness of human understanding, even in those that have honest hearts, and are desirous of knowing the truth! How is it possible, that any one who reads his Bible, can one hour remain in doubt concerning it, when our Lord himself, in the very passage cited above, has so clearly told us, what that blasphemy is? "He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness; because they said, he hath an unclean spirit," ver. 29, 30. This then, and this alone, (if we allow our Lord to understand his own meaning,) is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; *The saying, he had an unclean spirit;* the affirming that Christ wrought his miracles by the power of an evil spirit; or more particularly, that *he cast out devils, by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.* Now have *you* been guilty of this? Have *you* affirmed, that he cast out devils by the prince of devils? No more than you have cut your neighbour's throat, and set his house on fire. How marvellously then have you been afraid, where no fear is? Dismiss that vain terror; let your fear be more rational for the time to come. Be afraid of giving way to pride, be afraid of yielding to anger, be afraid of loving the world, or the things of the world, be afraid of foolish and

hurtful desires. But never more be afraid of committing the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! You are in no more danger of doing this, than of pulling the sun out of the firmament.

4. Ye have then no reason from Scripture, for imagining that "the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious." The arguments drawn from thence, you see, are of no weight, are utterly inconclusive. Is there any more weight in that which has been drawn from experience or matter of fact?

5. This is a point which may exactly be determined: and that with the utmost certainty. If it be asked, "Do any real apostates find mercy from God? Do any that have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, recover what they have lost? Do you know, have you seen any instance of persons, who found redemption in the blood of Jesus, and afterwards fell away, and yet were restored? 'Renewed again to repentance?'" Yea, verily: and not one; or a hundred only; but, I am persuaded, several thousands. In every place where the arm of the Lord has been revealed, and many sinners converted to God, there are several found, who "turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." For a great part of these "it had been better never to have known the way of righteousness." It only increases their damnation, seeing they die in their sins. But others there are, who "look unto him they have pierced, and mourn," refusing to be comforted. And, sooner or later, he surely lifts up the light of his countenance upon them. He strengthens the hands that hang down, and confirms the feeble knees. He teaches them again to say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Innumerable are the instances of this kind, of those who had fallen, but now stand upright. Indeed it is so far from being an uncommon thing, for a believer to fall and be restored, that it is rather uncommon to find any believers who are not conscious of having been backsliders from God, in a higher or lower degree, and perhaps more than once before they were established in faith.

6. "But have any that had fallen from sanctifying grace, been restored to the blessing they had lost?" This also is a point of experience: and we have had the opportunity of repeating our observations during a considerable course of years, and from the one end of the kingdom to the other.

7. And, first, we have known a large number of persons, of every age and sex, from early childhood to extreme old age, who have given all the proofs which the nature of the thing admits, that they were "sanctified throughout," "cleansed from all pollution both of flesh and spirit:" that they "loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength:" that they continually "presented" their souls and bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God:" in consequence of which, they "rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in every thing gave thanks." And this, and no other is what we believe to be true, scriptural sanctification.

8. Secondly, It is a common thing for those who are thus sanctified, to believe they cannot fall: to suppose themselves "pillars in the temple of God, that shall go out no more." Nevertheless we have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, moved from their steadfastness. Sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation; and pride, or anger, or foolish desires have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay, sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin hath regained dominion over them.

9. Yet, thirdly, several of these, after being thoroughly sensible of their fall, and deeply ashamed before God, have been again filled with his love, and not only *perfected* therein, but *stablished*, *strengthened*, and *settled*. They have received the blessing they had before, with abundant increase. Nay, it is remarkable, that many who had fallen either from justifying, or from sanctifying grace, and so deeply fallen, that they could hardly be ranked among the servants of God, have been restored, (but seldom till they had been shaken, as it were, over the mouth of hell!) and that, very frequently in an instant, to all that they had lost.

They have, at once, recovered both a consciousness of his favour and the experience of the pure love of God. In one moment they received anew, both remission of sins, and a lot among them that were sanctified.

10. But let not any man infer from this long-suffering of God, that he hath given any one a license to sin. Neither let any dare to continue in sin, because of these extraordinary instances of divine mercy. This is the most desperate, the most irrational presumption, and leads to utter, irrecoverable destruction. In all my experience, I have not known one, who fortified himself in sin, by a presumption that God would save him at the last, that was not miserably disappointed, and suffered to die in his sins. To turn the grace of God into an encouragement to sin, is the sure way to the nethermost hell!

11. It is not for these desperate sons of perdition, that the preceding considerations are designed; but for those who feel "the remembrance of their sins is grievous unto them, the burden of them is intolerable." We set before these an open door of hope: let them go in and give thanks unto the Lord. Let them know, that "the Lord is gracious and merciful; long-suffering and of great goodness." "Look how high the heavens are from the earth! So far will he set their sins from them." "He will not always be chiding; neither keepeth he his anger for ever." Only settle it in your heart, *I will give all for all*, and the offering shall be accepted. Give him all your heart! Let all that is within you continually cry out, "Thou art my God, and I will thank thee: thou art my God, and I will praise thee." —"This God is my God for ever and ever! He shall be my guide even unto death."

SERMON XCII.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

1 TIMOTHY VI. 9.

"*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*"

I. HOW innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men's not knowing, or not considering this great truth! And how few are there even in the christian world, that either know or duly consider it! Yea, how small is the number of those, even among real Christians, who understand and lay it to heart! Most of these too pass it very lightly over, scarce remembering there is such a text in the Bible. And many put such a construction upon it, as makes it of no manner of effect. "*They that will be rich*, say they, that is, will be rich at all events, who will be rich, right or wrong; that are resolved to carry their point, to compass this end, whatever means they use to attain it; *they fall into temptation*, and into all the evils enumerated by the Apostle." But truly if this were all the meaning of the text, it might as well have been out of the Bible.

2. This is so far from being the whole meaning of the text, that it is no part of its meaning. The Apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing: his words are to be taken in their plain

obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, "They that will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery, oppression, or extortion; they that will be rich by fraud or dishonest art;" but simply, "They that will be rich:" these, allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

3. But who believes this? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this? Great is the company of Preachers at this day, regular and irregular. But who of them all, openly and explicitly, preaches this strange doctrine? It is the keen observation of a great man, "The Pulpit is the Preacher's stronghold." But who even in his strong-hold has the courage to declare so unfashionable a truth? I do not remember, that in threescore years, I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject. And what author, within the same term, has declared it from the press?—At least, in the English tongue? I do not know one. I have neither seen or heard of any such author. I have seen two or three who just touch upon it; but none that treats of it professedly. I have myself frequently touched upon it in preaching, and thrice in what I have published to the world: once in explaining our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and once in the discourse on the *Mammon of unrighteousness*. But I have never yet either published or preached any sermon expressly upon the subject. It is high time I should;—that I should at length speak as strongly and explicitly as I can, in order to leave a full and clear testimony behind me, whenever it pleases God to call me hence.

4. O that God would give me to speak *right* and *forcible* words! And you to receive them in honest and humble hearts! Let it not be said, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words: but they will not do them. Thou art unto them as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words; but do them not!" O that ye may "not be

forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, that ye may be blessed in your deed!" In this hope I shall endeavour,

I. To explain the Apostle's Words. And,
II. To apply them.

But, O! "who is sufficient for these things?" Who is able to stem the general torrent? To combat all the prejudices, not only of the vulgar, but of the learned and the religious world? Yet nothing is too hard for God! Still his grace is sufficient for us. In his name then, and by his strength, I will endeavour,

I. To explain the words of the Apostle.

1. And, first, let us consider, What it is to *be rich?* What does the Apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of that, "Having food and raiment," (literally *coverings;* for the word includes *lodging* as well as *clothes,*) "let us be therewith content." "But they that will be rich," that is, they who will have more than these, more than *food* and *coverings,* —It plainly follows, whatever is more than these, is, in the sense of the Apostle, *riches,* whatever is above the plain necessaries, or, at most, conveniences of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is *rich.*

2. Let us consider, secondly, What is implied in that expression, "They that will be rich." And does not this imply, first, *They* that desire *to be rich,* to have more than *food* and *coverings:* they that seriously and deliberately desire more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a place where to lay their head, more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? All, at least, who allow themselves in this desire, who see no harm in it, *desire to be rich.*

3. And so do, secondly, all those that calmly, deliberately, and of set purpose, *endeavour* after more than *food and coverings:* that aim at and endeavour after, not only so much worldly substance, as will procure them the necessaries and conveniences of life, but more than this, whether

to lay it up or lay it out in superfluities. All these undeniably prove their *desire to be rich*, by their endeavours after it.

4. Must we not, thirdly, rank among those *that desire to be rich*, all that in fact "lay up treasures on earth?" a thing as expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord, as either adultery or murder. It is allowed, 1, That we are to provide necessaries and conveniences for those of our own household: 2, That men in business are to lay up as much as is necessary for the carrying on of that business: 3, That we are to leave our children what will supply them with necessaries and conveniences after we have left the world: and, 4, That we are to provide things honest in the sight of all men, so as to "owe no man any thing." But to lay up any more, when this is done, is what our Lord has flatly forbidden. When it is calmly and deliberately done, it is a clear proof of our desiring to be rich. And thus to lay up money is no more consistent with a good conscience, than to throw it into the sea.

5. We must rank among them, fourthly, All who *possess* more of this world's goods, than they use according to the Will of the Donor; I should rather say, of the Proprietor, for he only *lends* them to us as Stewards; reserving the property of them to himself. And, indeed, he cannot possibly do otherwise, seeing they are the work of his hands; he is, and must be, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is his unalienable right; a right he cannot divest himself of. And together with that portion of his goods, which he hath lodged in our hands, he has delivered to us a writing, specifying the purposes for which he has entrusted us with them. If, therefore, we keep more of them in our hands, than is necessary for the preceding purposes, we certainly fall under the charge of "desiring to be rich:" over and above we are guilty of burying our Lord's talent in the earth: and on that account are liable to be pronounced *wicked*, because *unprofitable servants*.

6. Under this imputation of "desiring to be rich," fall, fifthly, All "lovers of money." The word properly means,

those that *delight in money*, those that take pleasure in it, those that seek their happiness therein, that brood over their gold and silver, bills or bonds. Such was the man described by the fine Roman Painter, who broke out in that natural soliloquy,

"——Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi quoties nummos contemplor in arca."

If there are any vices which are not natural to man, I should imagine, this is one: as money of itself does not seem to gratify any natural desire or appetite of the human mind: and, as during an observation of sixty years, I do not remember one instance, of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent, according to the Will of his Master. After this, sin was punished by sin, and this evil spirit was permitted to enter into him.

7. But beside this gross sort of covetousness, *the love of money*, there is a more refined species of covetousness, mentioned by the great Apostle, πλεονεξία: which literally means, *a desire of having more*, more than we have already. And those also come under the denomination of, *they that will be rich*. It is true that this desire, under proper restrictions, is innocent: nay, commendable. But when it exceeds the bounds, (and how difficult is it not to exceed them!) then it comes under the present censure.

8. But who is able to receive these hard sayings? Who can believe that they are the great truths of God? Not many wise; not many noble; not many famed for learning: none, indeed, who are not taught of God: and who are they, whom God teaches? Let our Lord answer, "If any man be willing to do his Will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Those who are otherwise minded, will be so far from receiving it, that they will not be able to understand it. Two as sensible men as most in England, sat down together some time since, to read over and consider that plain discourse, on "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." After much deep consideration, one of them broke out, "Positively, I cannot under-

stand it. Pray do *you* understand it, Mr. L.?" Mr. L. honestly replied, "Indeed, not I. I cannot conceive what Mr. W. means. I can make nothing at all of it." So utterly blind is our natural understanding, touching the truth of God!

9. Having explained the former part of the text, "They that will be rich," and pointed out, in the clearest manner I could, the persons spoken of: I will now endeavour, God being my helper, to explain what is spoken of them, "They fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

"They fall into temptation." This seems to mean much more than simply, *they are tempted.* They *enter into the temptation:* they fall plump down into it. The waves of it compass them about, and cover them all over. Of those who thus enter into temptation, very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed. If they escape at all, it is with the skin of their teeth, and with deep wounds that are not easily healed.

10. They fall, secondly, *into a snare*, the snare of the devil, which he hath purposely set in their way. I believe the Greek word properly means a gin, a steel trap, which shews no appearance of danger. But as soon as any creature touches the spring, it suddenly closes, and either crushes its bones in pieces, or consigns it to inevitable ruin.

11. They fall, thirdly, *into many foolish and hurtful desires:* ανοητους: silly, senseless, fantastic: as contrary to reason, to sound understanding, as they are to religion: *hurtful*, both to body and soul, tending to weaken, yea, destroy every gracious and heavenly temper; destructive of that faith which is of the operation of God; of that hope which is full of immortality; of love to God and to our neighbour, and of every good word and work.

12. But what desires are these? This is a most important question, and deserves the deepest consideration.

In general, they may all be summed up in one, The desiring happiness out of God. This includes, directly or remotely, every foolish and hurtful desire. St. Paul expresses it by "loving the creature more than the Creator:" and by being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." In particular, they are (to use the exact and beautiful enumeration of St. John) "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life:" all of which, *the desire of riches* naturally tends both to beget and to increase.

13. *The desire of the flesh* is generally understood in far too narrow a meaning. It does not, as is commonly supposed, refer to one of the senses only, but takes in all the pleasures of sense, the gratification of any of the outward senses. It has reference to the *taste* in particular. How many thousands do we find at this day, in whom the ruling principle is, the desire to enlarge the pleasure of *tasting?* Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance: much less, so as to violate health, or impair their understanding, by gluttony or drunkenness. But they live in a genteel, regular sensuality, in an elegant epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul, keeping it at a distance from all true religion.

14. Experience shews, that the imagination is gratified chiefly by means of the eye. Therefore, *the desire of the eyes*, in its natural sense, is, the desiring and seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination. Now the imagination is gratified either by grandeur, by beauty, or by novelty: chiefly by the last: for neither grand nor beautiful objects please, any longer than they are new.

15. Seeking happiness in *learning*, of whatever kind, falls under "the desire of the eyes;" whether it be in history, languages, poetry, or any branch of natural or experimental philosophy: yea, we must include the several kinds of learning, such as Geometry, Algebra, and Metaphysics. For if our supreme delight be in any of these, we are herein gratifying "the desire of the eyes."

16. *The pride of life*, (whatever else that very uncommon expression η αλαζονεια του βιου, may mean,) seems to imply chiefly, the *desire of honour*, of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men: as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride, than the honour that cometh of men. And as *riches* attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionably minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.

17. *Desire of ease*, is another of these foolish and hurtful desires: desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven (as the vulgar say,) upon a feather-bed. Every one may observe, how riches first beget, and then confirm and increase this desire, making men more and more soft and delicate, more unwilling, and, indeed, more unable to "take up their cross daily," to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence."

18. Riches either desired or possessed, naturally lead to some or other of these foolish and hurtful desires; and by affording the means of gratifying them all, naturally tend to increase them. And there is a near connexion between unholy desires, and every unholy passion and temper. We easily pass from these to pride, anger, bitterness, envy, malice, revengefulness; to an headstrong, unadvisable, unreprovable spirit: indeed, to every temper, that is earthly, sensual, or devilish. All these, the desire or possession of riches naturally tends to create, strengthen, and increase.

19. And by so doing, in the same proportion as they prevail, they *pierce men through with many sorrows*: sorrows from remorse, from a guilty conscience: sorrows flowing from all the evil tempers which they inspire or increase: sorrows inseparable from those desires themselves, as every unholy desire is an uneasy desire; and sorrows from the contrariety of those desires to each other, whence it is impossible to gratify them all. And, in the end, *they drown*

the body in pain, disease, *destruction*, and the soul in everlasting *perdition*.

II. I. I am, in the Second place, to apply what has been said. And this is the principal point. For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the most excellent things, even of the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation, if it be not reduced to practice? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! And what he hears, let him instantly put in practice. O that God would give me the thing which I long for! That, before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them! A people truly given up to God, in body, soul, and substance! How cheerfully should I then say, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

2. I ask then, in the name of God, who of *you desire to be rich?* Which of *you*, (ask your own hearts in the sight of God,) seriously and deliberately desire, (and perhaps applaud yourselves for so doing, as no small instance of your *prudence*,) to have more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a house to cover you? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are you doing? Evil is before you? Will you rush upon the point of a sword? By the grace of God turn and live!

3. By the same authority I ask, who of you are *endeavouring* to be rich? To procure for yourselves more than the plain necessaries and conveniences of life? Lay, each of you, your hand to your heart, and seriously enquire, Am I of that number? Am I labouring, not only for what I want, but for more than I want? May the Spirit of God say to every one, whom it concerns, "Thou art the man!"

4. I ask, Thirdly, who of you are, in fact, *laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth?* Increasing in goods? Adding, as fast as you can, house to house, and field to field? As long as *thou* thus "dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." They will call thee a *wise*, a

prudent man! A man that *minds the main chance.* Such is, and always has been the wisdom of the world! *But God saith unto thee,* "Thou fool!" Art thou not "treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?"

5. Perhaps you will ask, But do not you yourself advise, "To gain all we can, and to save all we can? And is it possible to do this, without both *desiring* and *endeavouring to be rich?* Nay, suppose our endeavours are successful, without actually *laying up treasures upon earth?*"

I answer, it is possible. You may gain all you can, without hurting either your soul or body: you may save all you can, by carefully avoiding every needless expense; and yet never *lay up treasures on earth,* nor either desire or endeavour so to do.

6. Permit me to speak as freely of myself, as I would of another man. I *gain all I can,* (namely, by writing,) without hurting either my soul or body. I *save all I can,* not willingly wasting any thing, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. I do not lay out any thing, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can,* I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secured from either desiring or endeavouring it, as long as I *give all I can.* And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes, to testify.

7. But some may say, "Whether you endeavour it or not, you are undeniably *rich.* You have more than the necessaries of life." I have. But the Apostle does not fix the charge, barely on *possessing* any quantity of goods, but on possessing more than we employ according to the will of the Donor.

Two and forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people, with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a-piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and, by this mean, I, unawares, became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me un-

awares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desire and endeavour, in this respect, is to "wind my bottom round the year." I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence. But in every other respect, my own hands will be my Executors.

8. Herein, my brethren, let you that are rich, be even as I am. Do you that possess more than food and raiment ask, "What shall we do? Shall we throw into the sea, what God hath given us?" God forbid that you should! It is an excellent talent: it may be employed much to the glory of God. Your way lies plain before your face; if you have courage, walk in it. Having *gained*, in a right sense, *all you can*, and *saved all you can*: in spite of nature, and custom, and worldly prudence, *give all you can*. I do not say, "Be a good Jew," giving a tenth of all you possess. I do not say, "Be a good Pharisee," giving a fifth of all your substance. I dare not advise you, to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters, but all! Lift up your hearts, and you will see clearly, in what sense this is to be done. "If you desire to be 'a faithful and a wise Steward,' out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resumption whenever it pleaseth him, 1. Provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on; whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving you both in health and strength. 2. Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there be an overplus left, then do good to "them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you *give all you can*: nay, in a sound sense, all you have. For all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to to God. You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

9. O ye Methodists, hear the word of the Lord! I have a message from God to all men; but to *you* above all. For above forty years I have been a servant to you and to your fathers. And I have not been as a reed shaken with the wind: I have not varied in my testimony. I have testified to you the very same thing, from the first day even until now. But *who hath believed our report?* I fear not many rich, I fear there is need to apply to some of *you* those terrible words of the Apostle, "Go to now, ye rich men! Weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire." Certainly it will, unless ye both save all you can, and give all you can. But who of you hath considered this, since you first heard the will of the Lord concerning it? Who is now determined to consider and practise it? By the grace of God, begin to-day!

10. O ye *Lovers of Money*, hear the Word of the Lord! Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness? Then you are "given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie:" a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments. Open your eyes! Look all around you! Are the richest men the happiest? Have those the largest share of content, who have the largest possessions? Is not the very reverse true? Is it not a common observation, That the richest of men are, in general, the most discontented, the most miserable? Had not the far greater part of them more content, when they had less money? Look into your own breasts. If you are increased in goods, are you proportionably increased in happiness? You have more substance: but have you more content? You know that in seeking happiness from riches, you are only striving to drink out of empty cups. And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still.

11. O ye that *desire* or *endeavour to be rich*, hear ye the Word of the Lord! Why should ye be stricken any more? Will not even experience teach you wisdom? Will ye leap

into the pit with your eyes open? Why should you any more *fall into temptation?* It cannot be, but temptation will beset you, as long as you are in the body. But though it should beset you on every side, why will you *enter into* it? There is no necessity for this: it is your own voluntary act and deed. Why should you any more plunge yourselves *into a snare*, into the trap Satan has laid for you, that is ready to break your bones in pieces, to crush your soul to death? After fair warning, why should you sink any more into *foolish and hurtful desires?* Desires as inconsistent with reason, as they are with religion itself! Desires that have done you more hurt already, than all the treasures upon earth can countervail.

12. Have they not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slackening, if not utterly destroying your "hunger and thirst after righteousness?" Have you now the same longing that you had once, for the whole image of God? Have you the same vehement desire as you formerly had, of "going on unto perfection?" Have they not hurt you by weakening your *faith?* Have you now faith's "abiding impression, realizing things to come?" Do you endure, in all temptations, from pleasure or pain, "seeing him that is invisible?" Have you every day, and every hour, an uninterrupted sense of his presence? Have they not hurt you, with regard to your *hope?* Have you now a hope full of immortality? Are you still big with earnest expectation of all the great and precious promises? Do you now "taste the powers of the world to come?" Do you "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus?"

13. Have they not so hurt you, as to stab your religion to the heart? Have they not cooled (if not quenched) your *love of God?* This is easily determined. Have you the same delight in God which you once had? Can you now say,

> "I nothing want beneath, above;
> Happy, happy in thy love!"

I fear not. And if your love of God is in any wise decayed,

so is also your love of your neighbour. You are then hurt in the very life and spirit of your religion! If you lose love, you lose all.

14. Are not you hurt with regard to your *humility?* If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer man: and how can you help thinking so yourself? Especially, considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many with a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility, it will appear by this token: you are not so teachable as you were, not so adviseable: you are not so easy to be convinced, not so easy to be persuaded. You have a much better opinion of your own judgment, and are more attached to your own will. Formerly one might guide you with a thread: now one cannot turn you with a cart-rope. You were glad to be admonished or reproved: but that time is past. And you now account a man your enemy, because he tells you the truth. O let each of you calmly consider this, and see if it be not your own picture!

15. Are you not equally hurt, with regard to your *meekness?* You had once learned an excellent lesson of him that was meek as well as lowly in heart. When you were reviled, you reviled not again. You did not return railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. Your love was *not provoked*, but enabled you on all occasions, to overcome evil with good. Is this your case now? I am afraid not. I fear, you cannot "bear all things." Alas, it may rather be said, you can bear nothing: no injury, nor even affront! How quickly are you ruffled! How readily does that occur, "What! to use *me* so! What insolence is this! How did he dare to do it? I am not now what I was once. Let him know, I am now able to defend myself." You mean, to revenge yourself. And it is much, if you are not willing as well as able; if you do not take your fellow-servant by the throat.

16. And are you not hurt in your *patience* too? Does

your love now "endure all things?" Do you still, "in patience possess your soul," as when you first believed? O what a change is here! You have again learned, to be frequently out of humour. You are often fretful: you feel, nay, and give way to peevishness. You find abundance of things go so cross, that you cannot tell how to bear them!

Many years ago I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly: and generally gave away, year by year, nine tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair and cried out, "O Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand pounds a year?

17. But to return. Are not you, who have been successful in your endeavours to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!" You no longer "rush into the kingdom of heaven, and take it as by storm." You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourself, and take up your cross daily." You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or of a soft bed, in order to hear the word, that is able to save your soul! Indeed, you "cannot go out so early in the morning: besides it is dark: nay, cold; perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain: all these together, I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. You then regarded none of these things. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind: you are but the shadow of what you were. What have riches done for you?

"But it cannot be expected I should do as I have done. For I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my seventy-eighth year? Yet, by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet. Neither would *you*, if you were a poor man still.

18. You are so deeply hurt, that you have nigh lost

your zeal for works of mercy, as well as of piety. You once pushed on, through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up into their garrets:

"————To supply all their wants,
And spend and be spent in assisting his saints."

You found out every scene of human misery, and assisted, according to your power,

"Each form of woe your generous pity mov'd;
Your Saviour's face you saw, and seeing, lov'd."

Do you now tread in the same steps? What hinders? Do you fear spoiling your silken coat? Or is there another lion in the way? Are you afraid of catching vermin? And are you not afraid, lest the roaring lion should catch *you*? Are you not afraid of him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these, ye have not done it unto me?" What will follow? "Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

19. In time past how mindful were you of that word, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart.—Thou shalt in any wise reprove thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him!" You *did* reprove, directly or indirectly, all those that sinned in your sight. And happy consequences quickly followed. How good was a word spoken in season! It was often as an arrow from the hand of a giant. Many a heart was pierced. Many of the stout-hearted, who scorned to hear a sermon,

"Fell down before his cross subdu'd,
And felt his arrows dipt in blood."

But which of you now has that compassion for the ignorant, and for them that are out of the way? They may wander on for *you*, and plunge into the lake of fire, without let or hinderance. Gold hath steeled your hearts. You have something else to do. "Unhelp'd, unpitied let the wretches fall."

20. Thus have I given you, O ye gainers, lovers, pos-

sessors of riches, one more (it may be the last) warning. O that it may not be in vain! May God write it upon all your hearts! Though "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," yet the things impossible with men, are possible with God. Lord, speak! And even the rich men, that hear these words, shall enter thy kingdom! Shall "take the kingdom of heaven by violence;" shall "sell all for the pearl of great price!" Shall be "crucified to the world, and count all things dung, that they may win Christ!"

SERMON XCIII.

ON DRESS.

1 PETER III. 3, 4.

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of—wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.

"But let it be the hidden Man of the Heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price."

1. ST. PAUL exhorts all those who desire to "be transformed by the renewal of their minds," and to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," "Not to be conformed to this world." Indeed this exhortation relates more directly to the *wisdom* of the world, which is totally opposite to his "good, and acceptable, and perfect Will." But it likewise has a reference, even to the *manners* and *customs* of the world, which naturally flow from its wisdom and spirit, and are exactly suitable thereto. And it was not beneath the Wisdom of God, to give us punctual directions in this respect also.

2. Some of these, particularly that in the text, descend even to the apparel of Christians. And both this text and the parallel one of St. Paul, are as express as possible. St. Paul's words are, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10, "I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel: not—with gold, or

pearls, or costly array: but, (which becometh women professing godliness,) with good works."

3. But is it not strange, say some, that the All-wise Spirit of God should condescend to take notice of such trifles as these? To take notice of such insignificant trifles? Things of so little moment? Or rather of none at all? For what does it signify, provided we take care of the soul, what the body is covered with? Whether with silk or sackcloth? What harm can there be in the wearing of gold, or silver, or precious stones? Or any other of these beautiful things, with which God has so amply provided us? May we not apply to this, what St. Paul has observed on another occasion, That "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected?"

4. It is certain that many who sincerely fear God, have cordially embraced this opinion. And their practice is suitable thereto: they make no scruple of conformity to the world, by putting on, as often as occasion offers, either gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. And, indeed, they are not well pleased with those that think it their duty to reject them: the using of which they apprehend to be one branch of Christian Liberty. Yea, some have gone considerably farther: even so far, as to make it a point, to bring those who had refrained from them for some time, to make use of them again: assuring them, that it was mere superstition to think there was any harm in them. Nay, farther still, a very respectable person has said, in express terms, "I do not desire that any who *dress plain*, should be in our Society." It is, therefore, certainly worth our while to consider this matter thoroughly: seriously to enquire, Whether there is any harm in the putting on of gold, or jewels, or costly apparel?

5. But before we enter on the subject, let it be observed, That Slovenliness is no part of Religion: that neither this, nor any text of Scripture, condemns neatness of apparel: certainly this is a duty: not a sin: "Cleanliness is, indeed, next to godliness." Agreeably to this, good Mr. Herbert advises every one that fears God,

"Let thy mind's sweetness have its operation
Upon thy person, clothes, and habitation."

And surely every one should attend to this, if he would not have the good which is in him evil spoken of.

6. Another mistake with regard to apparel, has been common in the religious world. It has been supposed by some, that there ought to be no difference at all in the apparel of Christians. But neither these texts, nor any other in the Book of God, teach any such thing, or direct that the dress of the Master or the Mistress should be nothing different from that of their servants. There may, undoubtedly, be a moderate difference of apparel between persons of different stations. And where the eye is single, this will easily be adjusted by the Rules of Christian Prudence.

7. Yea, it may be doubted, whether any part of Scripture forbids, (at least I know not any,) those in any nation that are invested with supreme Authority, to be arrayed in gold and costly apparel; or to adorn their immediate attendants, or Magistrates, or Officers with the same. It is not improbable, that our blessed Lord intended to give countenance to this custom, when he said, without the least mark of censure, or disapprobation, "Behold, those that wear gorgeous" *(splendid)* "apparel, are in kings courts," Luke vii. 25.

8. What is then the meaning of these scriptures? What is it which they forbid? They manifestly forbid ordinary Christians, those in the lower or middle ranks of life, to be adorned with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. But why? What harm is there herein? This deserves our serious consideration. But it is highly expedient, or rather absolutely necessary for all who would consider it to any purpose, as far as is possible to divest themselves of all prejudice, and to stand open to conviction: Is it not necessary likewise in the highest degree, that they should earnestly beseech the Father of Lights, that, "by his holy inspiration they may think the things that are right, and, by his merciful guidance perform the same?" Then they will not say, no

not in their hearts, (as I fear too many have done,) what the famous Jew said to the Christian, "Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou hast persuaded me."

9. The question is, What harm does it do, to adorn ourselves with gold, or pearls, or costly array? Suppose you can *afford* it? That is, suppose it does not hurt or impoverish your family? The first harm it does is, It engenders *Pride*, and where it is already, increases it. Whoever narrowly observes what passes in his own heart, will easily discern this. Nothing is more natural than to think ourselves better, because we are dressed in better clothes. And it is scarcely possible for a man to wear costly apparel, without, in some measure, valuing himself upon it. One of the old Heathens was so well apprized of this, that when he had a spite to a poor man, and had a mind to turn his head, he made him a present of a suit of fine clothes.

"Eutrapelus, cuicunq; nocere volebat,
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa."

He could not then but imagine himself to be as much better, as he was finer than his neighbour. And how many thousands, not only lords and gentlemen in England, but honest tradesmen argue the same way? Inferring the superior value of their persons from the value of their clothes!

10. "But may not one man be as proud though clad in sackcloth, as another is, though clad in cloth of gold?" As this argument meets us at every turn, and is supposed to be unanswerable, it will be worth while to answer it once for all, and to shew the utter emptiness of it. "May not, then, one in sackcloth," you ask, "be as proud as he that is clad in cloth of gold?" I answer, Certainly he may: I suppose, no one doubts of it. And what inference can you draw from this? Take a parallel case. One man that drinks a cup of wholesome wine may be as sick as another that drinks poison. But does this prove that the poison has no more tendency to hurt a man than the wine? Or does it excuse any man for taking what has a natural tendency to make him sick? Now to apply this, experience

shews that fine clothes have a natural tendency to make a man sick of pride. Plain clothes have not. Although it is true, you may be sick of pride in these also, yet they have no natural tendency, either to cause or increase this sickness. Therefore, let all that desire to be clothed with humility, abstain from that poison.

11. Secondly, The wearing gay or costly apparel, naturally tends to breed and to increase *Vanity*. By vanity I here mean the love and desire of being admired and praised. Every one of you that is fond of dress, has a witness of this in your own bosom. Whether you will confess it before man or not, you are convinced of this before God. You know in your hearts, it is with a view to be admired that you thus adorn yourselves: and that you would not be at the pains, were none to see you, but God and his holy angels. Now the more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough by nature; but by thus indulging it, you increase it a hundredfold. O stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off.

12. Thirdly, the wearing of gay and costly apparel, naturally tends to beget *Anger*, and every turbulent and uneasy passion. And it is on this very account, that the Apostle places this "outward adorning" in direct opposition to the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." How remarkably does he add, "which is in the sight of God of great price:"

> "Than gold or pearls more precious far,
> And brighter than the morning star."

None can easily conceive, unless he himself were to make the sad experiment, the contrariety there is between the *outward adorning*, and this *inward quietness of spirit*. You never can thoroughly enjoy this, while you are fond of the other. It is only while you sit loose to that "outward adorning," that you can in "patience possess your soul." Then only when you have cast off your fondness for dress, will the Peace of God reign in your hearts.

13. Fourthly, Gay and costly apparel directly tends to

create and inflame lust. I was in doubt whether to name this brutal appetite. Or, in order to spare delicate ears, to express it by some gentle circumlocution. (Like the Dean, who some years ago, told his audience at Whitehall, "If you do not repent, you will go to a place, which I have too much manners to name before this good company.") But I think it best to speak out: since the more the word shocks your ears, the more it may arm your heart. The fact is plain and undeniable: it has this effect both on the wearer and the beholder. To the former, our elegant poet, Cowley, addresses these fine lines:

"The' adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barbarous skill;
'Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill."

That is, (to express the matter in plain terms, without any colouring,) "You poison the beholder, with far more of this base appetite, than otherwise he would feel." Did you not *know*, this would be the natural consequence of your elegant adorning? To push the question home, did you not *desire*, did you not *design* it should? And yet all the time, how did you

"————————Set to public view
A specious face of innocence and virtue?"

Meanwhile you do not yourself escape the snare which you spread for others. The dart recoils, and you are infected with the same poison with which you infected them. You kindle a flame, which, at the same time, consumes both yourself and your admirers. And it is well, if it does not plunge both you and them into the flames of hell.

14. Fifthly, The wearing costly array is directly opposite to the being *adorned with good works*. Nothing can be more evident than this: for the more you lay out on your own apparel, the less you have left to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to lodge the strangers, to relieve those that are sick and in prison, and to lessen the numberless afflictions to which we are exposed in this vale of tears. And here is no room for the evasion used before, "I may

be as *humble* in cloth of gold, as in sackcloth." If you could be as *humble*, when you choose costly, as when you choose plain apparel, (which I flatly deny,) yet you could not be as *beneficent*, as plenteous in good works. Every shilling which you save from your own apparel, you may expend in clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the Poor, whom ye "have always with you." Therefore, every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel, is, in effect, stolen from God and the Poor. And how many precious opportunities of doing good have you defrauded yourself of! How often have you disabled yourself from doing good, by purchasing what you did not want! For what end did you buy these ornaments? To please God? No; but to please your own fancy, or to gain the admiration and applause of those that were no wiser than yourself. How much good might you have done with that money! And what an irreparable loss have you sustained by not doing it, if it be true that the day is at hand, when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!"

15. I pray consider this well. Perhaps you have not seen it in this light before. When you are laying out that money in costly apparel, which you could have otherwise spared for the poor, you thereby deprive them of what God, the Proprietor of all, had lodged in your hands for their use. If so, what you put upon yourself, you are, in effect, tearing from the back of the naked; as the costly and delicate food which you eat, you are snatching from the mouth of the hungry. For mercy, for pity, for Christ's sake, for the honour of his gospel, stay your hand. Do not throw this money away. Do not lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering, fellow-creature!

16. Many years ago, when I was at Oxford, in a cold winter's day, a young maid, (one of those we kept at school,) called upon me. I said, You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown? She said, "Sir, this is all I have!" I put my hand in my

pocket; but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, "Will thy Master say, Well done, good and faithful Steward! Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold!" O Justice! O Mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid! See thy expensive apparel in the same light: thy gown, hat, head-dress! Every thing about thee, which cost more than Christian Duty required thee to lay out, is the blood of the poor! O be wise for the time to come! Be more merciful! More faithful to God and man! More abundantly *adorned*, (like men and women professing godliness,) *with good works*.

17. It is true, great allowance is to be made for those who have never been warned of these things, and perhaps do not know, that there is a word in the Bible, which forbids costly apparel. But what is *That* to *You?* You have been warned over and over; yea, in the plainest manner possible. And what have you profited thereby? Do not you still dress like other people of the same fortune? Is not your dress as gay, as expensive as theirs, who never had any such warning? As expensive as it would have been, if you had never heard a word said about it? O how will you answer this, when you and I stand together at the judgment-seat of Christ! Nay, have not many of you grown finer as fast as you have grown richer? As you increased in substance, have you not increased in dress? Witness the profusion of ribbands, gauze, or linen about your heads? What have you profited then by bearing the reproach of Christ? By being called Methodists? Are you not as fashionably dressed as others of your rank that are no Methodists? Do you ask, "But may we not as well buy fashionable things as unfashionable?" I answer, Not if they give you a bold, immodest look, (as those huge hats, bonnets, head-dresses do.) And not if they cost more. "But I can *afford* it:" O lay aside for ever that idle, nonsensical word! No Christian can *afford* to waste any part of the substance which God has entrusted

him with. How long are you to stay here! May not you to-morrow, perhaps to-night, be summoned to arise and go hence, in order to give an account of this and all your talents to the Judge of quick and dead?

18. How then is it, that after so many warnings, you persist in the same folly? Is it not hence? There are still among you, some that neither profit themselves by what they hear, nor are willing that others should: and these, if any of you are almost persuaded to dress as Christians, reason, and rally, and laugh you out of it. O ye pretty triflers, I entreat you not to do the devil's work any longer! Whatever ye do yourselves, do not harden the hearts of others. And you that are of a better mind, avoid these tempters with all possible care. And if you come where any of them are, either beg them to be silent on that head, or quit the room.

19. Sixthly, The putting on of costly apparel is directly opposite to what the Apostle terms "the hidden man of the heart," that is, to the whole *image of God*, wherein we were created, and which is stamped anew upon the heart of every Christian believer: opposite to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and the whole nature of inward holiness. All the time you are studying this *outward adorning*, the whole inward work of the Spirit stands still: or rather goes back, though by very gentle, and almost imperceptible degrees. Instead of growing more heavenly-minded, you are more and more earthly-minded. If you once had fellowship with the Father and the Son, it now gradually declines: and you insensibly sink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world; into foolish and hurtful desires, and groveling appetites. All these evils, and a thousand more, spring from that one root, indulging yourself in costly apparel.

20. Why then does not every one that either loves or fears God, flee from it, as from the face of a serpent? Why are *you* still so conformable to the irrational, sinful customs of a frantic world? Why do you still despise the express commandment of God, uttered in the plainest

terms? You see the light: why do not you follow the light of your own mind? Your conscience tells you the truth: why do you not obey the dictates of your own conscience?

21. You answer, "Why, Universal Custom is against me; and I know not how to stem the mighty torrent?" Not only the profane, but the religious world, run violently the other way. Look into, I do not say, the Theatres, but the Churches, nay, and the Meetings of every denomination; (except a few old fashioned Quakers, or the people called Moravians,) look into the congregations, in London or elsewhere, of those that are stiled Gospel Ministers: look into Northampton Chapel, yea, into the Tabernacle, or the Chapel in Tottenham-Court-Road: nay, look into the Chapel in West-Street, or that in the City-Road: look at the very people that sit under the pulpit, or by the side of it: and are not *those that can afford it*, (I can hardly refrain from doing them the honour of naming their names,) as fashionably adorned, as those of the same rank in other places?

22. This is a melancholy truth. I am ashamed of it: but I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that it is not my fault. The trumpet has not "given an uncertain sound," for near fifty years last past. O God! thou knowest I have borne a clear and a faithful testimony. In print, in preaching, in meeting the Society, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I am therefore clear of the blood of those that will not hear. It lies upon their own heads.

23. I warn you once more, in the Name, and in the Presence of God, that the number of those that rebel against God, is no excuse for your rebellion. He hath expressly declared, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." It was said of a great, good man, he

> "Fear'd not, had Heaven decreed it, to have stood
> Adverse against a world, and singly good."

Who of you desire to share in that glorious character? To stand adverse against a world? If millions condemn you,

it will be enough that you are acquitted by God and your own consciences.

24. "Nay, I think," say some, "I could bear the contempt or reproach of all the world beside. I regard none but my own relations, those especially that are of my own household. My father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, (and perhaps one that is nearer than them all,) are teasing me continually." This is a trial indeed, such as very few can judge of, but those that bear it. "I have not strength to bear it." No, not of your own: certainly you have not. But "there is strength laid up for you on One that is mighty!" His grace is sufficient for you; and he now sees your case, and is just ready to give it you. Meantime, remember his awful declaration, touching them that regard man more than God, "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, more than me, is not worthy of me."

25. But are there not some among you that did once renounce this conformity to the world, and dress, in every point, neatly and plainly, suitable to your profession? Why then did you not persevere therein? Why did you turn back from the good way? Did you contract an acquaintance, perhaps a friendship, with some that were still fond of dress? It is no wonder then that you were, sooner or later, moved "to measure back your steps to earth again." No less was to be expected, than that one sin would lead you on to another. It was one sin to contract a friendship with any that knew not God: for "know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" And this led you back into another, into that conformity to the world, from which you had clean escaped. But what are you to do now? Why, if you be wise, escape for your life: no delay: look not behind you! Without loss of time, renounce the cause and the effect together. Now, to-day, before the heart be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, cut off, at one stroke, that sinful friendship with the ungodly, and that sinful conformity to the world! Determine this day! Do not delay

till to-morrow, lest you delay for ever. For God's sake, for your own soul's sake, fix your resolution now!

26. I conjure you all who have any regard for *me*, shew me before I go hence, that I have not laboured, even in this respect, in vain, for near half a century. Let me see, before Idie, a Methodist congregation, full as plain dressed as a Quaker congregation. Only be more consistent with yourselves. Let your dress be *cheap* as well as plain. Otherwise you do but trifle with God and me, and your own souls. I pray, let there be no costly silks among you, how grave soever they may be. Let there be no Quaker-linen, proverbially so called, for its exquisite fineness: no Brussels lace, no Elaphantine hats or bonnets, those scandals of Female Modesty. Be all of a piece, dressed from head to foot, as persons *professing godliness:* professing to do every thing, small and great, with the single view of pleasing God.

27. Let not any of you, who are rich in this world, endeavour to excuse yourselves from this by talking nonsense. It is stark staring nonsense to say, "O I can *afford* this or that." If you have regard to common sense, let that silly word never come out of your mouth. No man living can *afford* to waste any part of what God has committed to his trust. None can *afford* to throw any part of that food and raiment into the sea, which was lodged with him, on purpose to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. And it is far worse than simple waste, to spend any part of it in gay or costly apparel. For this is no less than to turn wholesome food into deadly poison. It is giving so much money to poison both yourself and others, as far as your example spreads, with pride, vanity, anger, lust, love of the world, and a thousand "foolish and hurtful desires," which tend to "pierce them through with many sorrows." And is there no harm in all this? O God, arise and maintain thy own cause! Let not men or devils any longer put out our eyes, and lead us blindfold into the pit of destruction.

28. I beseech you, every man that is here resent before God, every woman, young or old, married or single, yea,

every child that knows good from evil, take this to yourself. Each of you for one, take the Apostle's advice: at least, hinder not others from taking it. I beseech you, O ye parents, do not hinder your children from following their own convictions: even though you might think they would *look prettier*, if they were adorned with such gewgaws as other children wear. I beseech you, O ye husbands, do not hinder your wives: you, O ye wives, do not hinder your husbands, either by word or deed, from acting just as they are persuaded in their own minds. Above all, I conjure you, ye half Methodists, you that trim between us and the world, you that frequently, perhaps constantly, hear our preaching, but are in no farther connexion with us: yea, and all you that were once in full connexion with us, but are not so now: whatever ye do yourselves, do not say one word to hinder others from recovering and practising the advice which has been now given! Yet a little while and we shall not need these poor coverings: for this corruptible body shall put on incorruption. Yet a few days hence, and this mortal body shall put on immortality. In the mean time, let this be our only care, "to put off the old man," our old nature, "which is corrupt," which is altogether evil: and to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In particular, "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering." Yea, to sum up all in one word, "put on Christ, that when he shall appear, ye may appear with him in glory."

SERMON XCIV.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

1 CORINTHIANS XII. 31.

"Covet earnestly the best Gifts; and yet I shew unto you a more excellent Way."

1. IN the preceding verses St. Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost: such as healing the sick, prophesying in the proper sense of the word, that is, foretelling things to come, speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned, and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. And these gifts the Apostle allows to be desirable: yea, he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them, (to whom chiefly, if not solely, they were wont to be given in the first ages of the Church,) to *covet* them *earnestly*, that thereby they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or Heathens. "And yet," says he, "I shew unto you a more excellent way," far more desirable than all these put together. Inasmuch as it will infallibly lead you to happiness, both in this world and in the world to come: whereas you might have all those gifts, yea, in the highest degree, and yet be miserable both in time and eternity.

2. It does not appear, that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were very common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after

that fatal period, when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches, and power, and honour, upon the Christians in general; but, in particular, upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased: very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," all the world having become Christians. This is a miserable mistake: not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christians. The real cause was, *the love of many*, almost of all Christians, so called, was *waxed cold.* The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ, than the other Heathens. The Son of Man when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause, why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

3. However, I would not, at present, speak of these, of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but of the ordinary: and these, likewise, we may *covet earnestly*, in order to be more useful in our generation. With this view we may covet "the gift of *Convincing* speech," in order to "sound the unbelieving heart:" and the gift of *Persuasion* to move the affections, as well as enlighten the understanding. We may covet *Knowledge*, both of the word and of the works of God, whether of Providence or Grace. We may desire a measure of that Faith which on particular occasions, wherein the glory of God or the happiness of men is nearly concerned, goes far beyond the power of natural causes. We may desire an easy elocution, a pleasing address, with resignation to the Will of our Lord: yea, whatever would enable us, as we have opportunity, to be useful wherever we are. These gifts we may innocently desire: but there is a more excellent Way.

4. The Way of Love, of loving all men for God's sake, of humble, gentle, patient love, is that which the Apostle so

admirably describes in the ensuing chapter. And without this, he assures us, all eloquence, all knowledge, all faith, all works, and all sufferings, are of no more value in the sight of God, than sounding brass or a rumbling cymbal: and are not of the least avail toward our eternal salvation. Without this, all we know, all we believe, all we do, all we suffer, will profit us nothing in the great day of accounts.

5. But at present I would take a different view of the text, and point out the more excellent Way in another sense. It is the observation of an ancient Writer, That there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world, doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavoured, in general, to have a conscience void of offence in their behaviour, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbours. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works of every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God; but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole Mind that was in Christ, and laboured to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of universal self-denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter into the strait gate. This one thing they did; they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness: "leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection:" to "know all the love of God which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God."

6. From long experience and observation I am inclined to think, that whoever finds redemption in the Blood of Jesus, whoever is justified, has then the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe, the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the more excellent Way, and

incites him to walk therein, to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way, to aspire after the heights and depths of holiness, after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called a good way, serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life, through the Blood of the Covenant.

7. I would be far from quenching the smoking flax, from discouraging those that serve God in a low degree. But I could not wish them to stop here: I would encourage them to come up higher, without thundering hell and damnation in their ears. Without condemning the way wherein they are, telling them it is the way that leads to destruction, I will endeavour to point out to them, what is, in every respect, a more excellent Way.

8. Let it be well remembered, I do not affirm, that all who do not walk in this way, are in the high road to hell. But this much I must affirm, they will not have so high a place in heaven, as they would have had, if they had chosen the better path: and will this be a small loss? The having so many fewer stars in your crown of glory! Will it be a little thing to have a lower place than you might have had in the kingdom of your Father? Certainly there will be no sorrow in heaven: there all tears will be wiped from our eyes. But if it were possible grief could enter there, we should grieve at that irreparable loss! Irreparable then, but not now! Now, by the grace of God, we may choose the *more excellent Way*. Let us now compare this in a few particulars, with the way wherein most Christians walk.

I. 1. To begin at the beginning of the day. It is the manner of the generality of Christians, if they are not obliged to work for their living, *to rise*, particularly in winter, at eight or nine in the morning, after having lain in bed eight or nine, if not more hours. I do not say now, (as I should have been very apt to do fifty years ago,) that all who indulge themselves in this manner, are in the way to hell. But neither can I say, they are in the way to heaven, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily. Sure

I am, there is a more excellent way, to promote health both of body and mind. From an observation of more than sixty years, I have learned, that men in health require, at an average, from six to seven hours sleep; and healthy women a little more, from seven to eight, in four and twenty hours. I know this quantity of sleep to be most advantageous to the body as well as the soul. It is preferable to any medicine which I have known, both for preventing and removing nervous disorders. It is, therefore, undoubtedly, the most excellent way, in defiance of fashion and custom, to take just so much sleep, as experience proves our nature to require; seeing this is indisputably most conducive both to bodily and spiritual health. And why should not you walk in this way? Because it is difficult? Nay, with men it is impossible. But all things are possible with God; and by his grace, all things will be possible to *you*. Only continue instant in prayer, and you will find this, not only possible, but easy: yea, and it will be far easier, to rise early constantly, than to do it sometimes. But then you must begin at the right end, if you would rise early, you must sleep early. Impose it upon yourself, unless when something extraordinary occurs, to go to bed at a fixed hour. Then the difficulty of it will soon be over; but the advantage of it will remain for ever.

II. 1. The generality of Christians, as soon as they rise, are accustomed to use some kind of *prayer*: and probably to use the same form still, which they learned when they were eight or ten years old. Now I do not condemn those who proceed thus, (though many do,) as mocking God; though they have used the same form, without any variation, for twenty or thirty years together. But surely there is a more excellent way of ordering our private devotions. What if you were to follow the advice given by that great and good man, Mr. Law, on this subject? Consider both your outward and inward state, and vary your prayers accordingly. For instance: suppose your outward state is prosperous: suppose you are in a state of health, ease, and plenty, having your lot cast among kind relations, good

neighbours, and agreeable friends, that love you, and you them: then your outward state manifestly calls for praise and thanksgiving to God. On the other hand, if you are in a state of adversity; if God has laid trouble upon your loins; if you are in poverty, in want, in outward distress; if you are in imminent danger; if you are in pain and sickness: then you are clearly called to pour out your soul before God, in such prayer as is suited to your circumstances. In like manner you may suit your devotions to your inward state, the present state of your mind. Is your soul in heaviness, either from a sense of sin, or through manifold temptations? Then let your prayer consist of such confessions, petitions, and supplications, as are agreeable to your distressed situation of mind. On the contrary, is your soul in peace? Are you rejoicing in God? Are his consolations not small with you? Then say with the Psalmist, "Thou art my God, and I will love thee: thou art my God, and I will praise thee." You may, likewise, when you have time, add to your other devotions, a little reading and meditation: and perhaps a psalm of praise, the natural effusion of a thankful heart. You must certainly see, that this is a more excellent way than the poor, dry form which you used before.

III. 1. The generality of Christians, after using some prayer, usually apply themselves to the *business* of their calling. Every man that has any pretence to be a Christian, will not fail to do this: seeing it is impossible that an idle man can be a good man: sloth being inconsistent with religion. But with what view? For what end do you undertake and follow your worldly business? "To provide things necessary for myself and my family." It is a good answer as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. For a Turk or a Heathen goes so far; does his work for the very same ends. But a Christian may go abundantly farther; his end in all his labour is, to please God; to do, not his own will, but the will of him that sent him into the world: for this very purpose, to do the will of God on earth, as angels do in heaven. He works for

eternity. He "labours not for the meat that perisheth," (this is the smallest part of his motive,) "but for that which endureth to everlasting life." And is not this "a more excellent way?"

2. Again. In what *manner* do you transact your worldly business? I trust, with *diligence;* whatever your hand findeth to do, doing it with your might: in justice, rendering to all their due, in every circumstance of life: yea, and in mercy, doing unto every man what you would he should do unto you. This is well: but a Christian is called to go still farther, to add piety to justice; to intermix prayer, especially the prayer of the heart, with all the labour of his hands. Without this, all his diligence and justice only shew him to be an honest Heathen; and many there are who profess the Christian Religion, that go no farther than honest Heathenism.

3. Yet again. In what *spirit* do you go through your business? In the spirit of the world, or in the spirit of Christ? I am afraid thousands of those who are called good Christians, do not understand the question. If you act in the spirit of Christ, you carry the end you at first proposed, through all your work from first to last. You do every thing in the spirit of sacrifice, giving up your will to the Will of God, and continually aiming, not at ease, pleasure, or riches, not at any thing this short enduring world can give; but merely at the glory of God. Now can any one deny, that this is the most excellent way of pursuing worldly business?

IV. 1. But these tenements of clay which we bear about us, require constant reparation, or they will sink into the earth from which they were taken, even sooner than nature requires. Daily food is necessary to prevent this, to repair the decays of nature. It was common in the Heathen world, when they were about to use this, to take meat or even drink, *libare pateram Jovi,* to pour out a little to the honour of their god: although the gods of the Heathens were but devils, as the Apostle justly observes. "It seems, (says a late Writer,) there was once some such custom as

this in our own country. For we still frequently see a gentleman before he sits down to dinner in his own house, holding his hat before his face, and perhaps seeming to say something: though he generally does it in such a manner, that no one can tell what he says." Now what if, instead of this, every head of a family, before he sat down to eat and drink, either morning, noon, or night, (for the reason of the thing is the same at every hour of the day,) were seriously to ask a blessing from God, on what he was about to take? Yea, and afterward, seriously to return thanks to the Giver of all his blessings? Would not this be a more excellent way, than to use that dull farce, which is worse than nothing, being, in reality, no other than mockery both of God and man?

2. As to the *quantity* of their food, good sort of men do not usually eat to excess. At least not so far as to make themselves sick with meat, or to intoxicate themselves with drink. And as to the manner of taking it, it is usually innocent, mixed with a little mirth, which is said to help digestion. So far, so good. And provided they take only that measure of plain, cheap, wholesome food, which most properly promotes health both of body and mind, there will be no cause of blame. Neither can I require you to take that advice of Mr. Herbert, though he was a good man;

> "Take thy meat: think it dust: then eat a bit,
> And say with all, earth to earth I commit."

This is too melancholy: it does not suit with that cheerfulness, which is highly proper at a christian meal. Permit me to illustrate this subject with a little story. The king of France one day pursuing the chace, outrode all his company, who, after seeking him some time, found him sitting in a cottage eating bread and cheese. Seeing them, he cried out, Where have I lived all my time? I never before tasted so good food in my life! "Sire," said one of them, "you never had so *good sauce* before; for you were never hungry." Now it is true, Hunger is a good sauce: but there is one that is better still; that is, Thankfulness. Sure that is the most agreeable food, which is seasoned

with this. And why should not yours at every meal? You need not then fix your eye on death: but receive every morsel as a pledge of life eternal. The Author of your being gives you in this food, not only a reprieve from death, but an earnest, that, in a little time, *death* shall *be swallowed up in victory*.

3. The time of taking our food is usually a time of *conversation* also: as it is natural, to refresh our minds while we refresh our bodies. Let us consider a little, in what manner the generality of Christians usually converse together. What are the ordinary subjects of their conversation? If it is harmless, (as one would hope it is,) if there be nothing in it profane, nothing immodest, nothing untrue, or unkind: if there be no tale-bearing, back-biting, or evil-speaking, they have reason to praise God for his restraining grace. But there is more than this implied, in "ordering our conversation aright." In order to this it is needful, first, That *your communication*, that is, discourse or conversation *be good*. That it be materially good, on good subjects; not fluttering about any thing that occurs. For what have you to do with Courts and Kings? It is not your business to

"Fight o'er the wars, reform the state,"

unless when some remarkable event calls for the acknowledgment of the justice or mercy of God. You *must* indeed sometimes talk of worldly things, otherwise we may as well go out of the world. But it should be only so far as is needful: then we should return to a better subject. Secondly, Let your conversation be "to the use of edifying;" calculated to edify either the speaker or hearers, or both: to build them up, as each has particular need, either in faith, or love, or holiness: Thirdly, See that it not only gives entertainment, but in one kind or other, "ministers grace to the hearers." Now is not this a more excellent way of *conversing*, than the harmless way above-mentioned?

V. 1. We have seen what is the more excellent way of ordering our conversation, as well as our business. But

we cannot be always intent upon our business: both our bodies and minds require some relaxation. We need intervals of diversion from business: it will be necessary to be very explicit upon this head, as it is a point which has been much misunderstood.

2. Diversions are of various kinds. Some are almost peculiar to men, as the sports of the field: Hunting, Shooting, Fishing, wherein not many women, (I should say, Ladies,) are concerned. Others are indifferently used by persons of both sexes: some of which are of a more public nature: as Races, Masquerades, Plays, Assemblies, Balls. Others are chiefly used used in private houses, as Cards, Dancing, and Music: to which we may add, The reading of Plays, Novels, Romances, News-Papers, and fashionable Poetry.

3. Some diversions, indeed, which were formerly in great request, are now fallen into disrepute. The Nobility and Gentry, in England at least, seem totally to disregard the once fashionable diversion of Hawking: and the Vulgar themselves are no longer diverted, by men hacking and hewing each other in pieces at Broad-Sword. The noble game of Quarter-staff, likewise, is now exercised by very few. Yea, Cudgelling has lost its honour, even in Wales itself. Bear-baiting also is now very seldom seen, and Bull-baiting not very often. And it seems Cock-fighting would totally cease in England, were it not for two or three Right Honourable Patrons.

4. It is not needful to say any more of these foul *remains of Gothic barbarity*, than that they are a reproach, not only to all religion, but even to human nature. One would not pass so severe a censure on the sports of the field. Let those who have nothing better to do, still run Foxes and Hares out of breath. Neither need much be said about Horse-races, till some man of sense will undertake to defend them. It seems a great deal more may be said in defence of seeing a serious Tragedy. I could not do it with a clear conscience; at least not in an English Theatre, the sink of all profaneness and debauchery; but possibly

others can. I cannot say quite so much for Balls or Assemblies, which though more reputable than Masquerades, yet must be allowed by all impartial persons to have exactly the same tendency. So, undoubtedly, have all Public Dancings. And the same tendency they must have, unless the same caution obtained among modern Christians which was observed among the ancient Heathens. With them men and women never danced together; but always in separate rooms. This was always observed in ancient Greece, and for several ages at Rome: where a woman dancing in company with men, would have at once been set down for a prostitute. Of playing at Cards, I say the same as of seeing Plays. I could not do it with a clear conscience. But I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those that are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master; to him let them stand or fall.

5. But supposing these, as well as the reading of Plays, Novels, News-Papers and the like, to be quite *innocent diversions*, yet are there not *more excellent ways* of diverting themselves, for those that love or fear God? Would men of fortune divert themselves in the open air? They may do it by cultivating and improving their lands, by planting their grounds, by laying out, carrying on, and perfecting their gardens and orchards. At other times they may visit and converse with the most serious and sensible of their neighbours: or they may visit the sick, the poor, the widows, and the fatherless in their affliction. Do they desire to divert themselves in the house? They may read useful History, pious and elegant Poetry, or several branches of Natural Philosophy. If you have time, you may divert yourself by Music, and perhaps by Philosophical Experiments. But above all, when you have once learned the use of prayer, you will find, that as

——————— "That which yields or fills,
All Space, the ambient Air, wide interfus'd
Embraces round this florid Earth:"

so will this, till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, what-

ever you do, embrace you on every side. Then you will be able to say boldly,

"With me no melancholy void,
No moment lingers unemploy'd,
Or unimprov'd below;
My weariness of life is gone,
Who live to serve my God alone,
And only Jesus know."

VI. One point only remains to be considered; that is the Use of Money. What is the way wherein the generality of Christians employ this? And is there not a more excellent way?

1. The generality of Christians usually set apart something yearly, perhaps a tenth or even one-eighth part of their income, whether it arise from yearly revenue, or from trade, for charitable uses. A few I have known who said, like Zaccheus, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." O that it would please God to multiply those friends of mankind, those general benefactors! But,

2. Besides those who have a stated rule, there are thousands who give large sums to the Poor: especially when any striking instance of distress is represented to them in lively colours.

3. I praise God for all of you who act in this manner. May you never be weary of well-doing! May God restore what you give, seven-fold into your own bosom! But yet I shew unto you a more excellent way.

4. You may consider yourself as one, in whose hands the Proprietor of heaven and earth and all things therein, has lodged a part of his goods, to be disposed of according to his direction. And his direction is, that you should look upon yourself as one of a certain number of indigent persons, who are to be provided for out of that portion of his goods, wherewith you are entrusted. You have two advantages over the rest: the one, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" the other, that you are to serve yourself first; and others afterwards. This is the light wherein you are to see yourself and them: but to be more

particular, First, if you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains: so that

"Each Christmas your accounts may clear,
And wind your bottom round the year."

This was the practice of all the young men at Oxford, who were called Methodists. For example. One of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on twenty eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two and thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived as before on twenty-eight; and gave to the poor ninety-two. Was not this a more excellent way? Secondly, if you have a family, seriously consider before God, how much each member of it wants, in order to have what is needful for life and godliness. And in general, do not allow them less, nor much more than you allow yourself. Thirdly, this being done, fix your purpose, to "gain no more." I charge you in the name of God, do not increase your substance! As it comes daily or yearly, so let it go: otherwise you "lay up treasures upon earth." And this our Lord as flatly forbids, as murder and adultery. By doing it, therefore, you would "treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

5. But suppose it were not forbidden, how can you on principles of reason, spend your money in a way, which God may *possibly forgive*, instead of spending it in a manner which he will *certainly reward?* You will have no reward in heaven, for what you *lay up:* you will, for what you *lay out:* every pound you put into the earthly Bank is sunk: it brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the Poor, is put into the Bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest: yea, and such as will be accumulating to all eternity.

6. Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you! Let him resolve this day, this hour, this

moment, the Lord assisting him, to choose in all the preceding particulars the *more excellent way:* and let him steadily keep it, both with regard to sleep, prayer, work, food, conversation, and diversions: and particularly, with regard to the employment of that important Talent, MONEY. Let *your* heart answer to the call of God, "From this moment, God being my helper, I will lay up no more treasure upon earth: this one thing I will do, I will lay up treasure in heaven: I will render unto God the things that are God's; I will give him all my Goods, and all my Heart."

SERMON XCV.

AN ISRAELITE INDEED.

JOHN I. 47.

"*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile.*"

1. SOME years ago a very ingenious man, Professor Hutcheson of Glasgow, published two Treatises, on the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue. In the latter of these he maintains, That the very Essence of Virtue is, The love of our fellow-creatures. He endeavours to prove, That Virtue and Benevolence are one and the same thing: that every temper is only so far virtuous, as it partakes of the nature of Benevolence: and that all our words and actions are then only virtuous, when they spring from the same principle. "But does he not suppose Gratitude, or the Love of God, to be the foundation of this Benevolence?" By no means: such a supposition as this never entered into his mind. Nay, he supposes just the contrary: he does not make the least scruple to aver, That if any temper or action be produced, by any regard to God, or any view to a reward from him, it is not virtuous at all: and that if an action spring partly from benevolence, and partly from a view to God, the more there is in it of a view to God, the less there is of virtue.

2. I cannot see this beautiful Essay of Mr. Hutcheson's

in any other light, than as a decent, and, therefore, more dangerous attack upon the whole of the Christian Revelation: seeing this asserts the love of God to be the true foundation, both of the love of our neighbour, and all other virtues: and accordingly, places this as *the first and great Commandment*, on which all the rest depend, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." So that, according to the Bible, benevolence, or the love of our neighbour, is only the *second* commandment. And suppose the Scripture to be of God, it is so far from being true, that benevolence alone is both the foundation and the essence of all virtue, that benevolence itself is no virtue at all, unless it spring from the love of God.

3. Yet it cannot be denied, that this writer himself has a marginal note in favour of Christianity. "Who would not wish, (says he,) that the Christian Revelation could be proved of God? Seeing it is, unquestionably, the most benevolent institution that ever appeared in the world." But is not this, if it be considered thoroughly, another blow at the very root of that Revelation? Is it more or less than to say, "I wish it could; but, in truth, it cannot be proved?"

4. Another ingenious writer advances an hypothesis totally different from this. Mr. Wollaston, in the book which he entitles, "The Religion of Nature delineated," endeavours to prove, that "Truth is the Essence of Virtue," or conformableness to Truth. But it seems, Mr. Wollaston goes farther from the Bible than Mr. Hutcheson himself. For Mr. Hutcheson's scheme sets aside only one of the two great commandments, namely, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God:" whereas, Mr. Wollaston sets aside both: for his hypothesis does not place the essence of virtue, in either the love of God or the love of our neighbour.

5. However, both of these authors agree, though in different ways, to put asunder what God has joined. But St. Paul unites them together in teaching us to *speak the Truth in Love*. And undoubtedly, both truth and love were

united in him, to whom he who knows the hearts of all men, gives this amiable character, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

6. But who is it, concerning whom our blessed Lord gives this glorious testimony? Who is this Nathanael, of whom so remarkable an account is given in the latter part of the chapter before us? Is it not strange, that he is not mentioned again in any part of the New Testament? He is not mentioned again under this name; but probably he had another, whereby he was more commonly called. It was generally believed by the ancients, that he is the same person who is elsewhere termed Bartholemew: one of our Lord's Apostles, and one that, in the enumeration of them, both by St. Matthew and St. Mark, is placed immediately after St. Philip, who first brought him to his Master. It is very probable, that his proper name was Nathanael, a name common among the Jews: and that his other name, Bartholomew, meaning only the son of Ptolemy, was derived from his father, a custom which was then exceeding common among the Jews, as well as the Heathens.

7. By what little is said of him in the context, he appears to have been a man of an excellent spirit: not hasty of belief, and yet open to conviction, and willing to receive the truth, from whencesoever it came. So we read, (ver. 45,) "Philip findeth Nathanael," (probably, by what we term accident,) "and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." "Nathanael saith unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Has Moses spoken, or did the Prophets write of any Prophet to come from thence? "Philip saith unto him, "Come, and see," and thou wilt soon be able to judge for thyself. Nathanael took his advice, without staying to confer with flesh and blood. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming, and saith, Behold an Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile!" "Nathanael saith," doubtless, with surprise enough, "Whence knowest thou me?" "Jesus saith, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." "Nathanael answered and sai unto

him," (so soon was all prejudice gone!) "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!"

But what is implied in our Lord's character of him? "In whom is no guile?" It may include all that is contained in that advice,

——"Still let thy heart be true to God,
Thy words to it, thy actions to them both."

I. 1. We may first observe, what is implied in having our hearts true to God? Does this imply any less than is included in that gracious command, "My son, give me thy heart?" Then only is our heart *true to God*, when we give it to him. We give him our heart in the lowest degree, when we *seek* our happiness in him: when we do not seek it in gratifying "the desire of the flesh," in any of the pleasures of sense; nor in gratifying "the desire of the eye," in any of the pleasures of the imagination, arising from grand, or new, or beautiful objects, whether of nature or art. Neither in "the pride of life," in "the honour that cometh of men," in being beloved, esteemed, and applauded by them: no, nor yet in what some term, with equal impudence and ignorance, *the main chance*, the "laying up treasures on earth." When we seek happiness in none of these, but in God alone, then we, in some sense, give him our heart.

2. But in a more proper sense, we give God our heart, when we not only seek, but find happiness in him. This happiness undoubtedly begins, when we begin to know him by the teaching of his own Spirit: when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts, so that we can humbly say, "My Lord and my God:" and when the Son is pleased to reveal his Father in us, by "the Spirit of adoption crying in our hearts, Abba Father," and bearing his "testimony to our spirits, that we are the children of God." Then it is that "the love of God also is shed abroad in our hearts." And according to the degree of our love, is the degree of our happiness.

3. But it has been questioned, Whether it is the design of God, that the happiness which is at first enjoyed by all that

know and love him, should continue any longer than, as it were, the day of their espousals? In very many, we must allow, it does not: but in a few months, perhaps weeks, or even days, the joy and peace either vanishes at once, or gradually decays. Now, if God is willing that their happiness should continue, how is this to be accounted for?

4. I believe, very easily: St. Jude's exhortation, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," certainly implies, that something is to be done on our part, in order to its continuance. And is not this agreeable to that declaration of our Lord, concerning this and every gift of God, "Unto him that hath, shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but from him that hath not," that is, uses it not, improves it not, "shall be taken away even that which he hath," Luke viii. 18.

5. Indeed, part of this verse is translated in our version, *That which he seemeth to have.* But it is difficult to make sense of this. For if he only *seemeth* to have this, or any other gift of God, he really hath it not. And if so, it cannot be taken away: for no man can lose what he never had. It is plain, therefore, ο δοκει εχειν, ought to be rendered, *what he assuredly hath.* And it may be observed, that the word δοκεω, in various places of the New Testament, does not lessen, but strengthen the sense of the word joined with it. Accordingly, whoever improves the grace he has already received, whoever increases in the love of God, will surely retain it. God will continue, yea, will give it more abundantly: whereas, whoever does not improve this talent, cannot possibly retain it. Notwithstanding all he can do, it will infallibly be taken away from him.

II. 1. Mean time, as the heart of him that is *an Israelite indeed* is true to God, so his words are suitable thereto. And as there is no guile lodged in his heart, so there is none found in his lips. The first thing implied herein, is *Veracity*, the speaking the truth from his heart: the putting away all wilful lying, in every kind and degree. A lie, according to a well-known definition of it is, *Falsum testimonium, cum intentione fallendi*: a falsehood known to be such by the speaker, and uttered with an intention to deceive. But

even the speaking of a falsehood is not a lie, if it be not spoken with an intent to deceive.

2. Most Casuists, particularly those of the Church of Rome, distinguish lies into three sorts: the first sort is malicious lies; the second, harmless lies; the third, officious lies: concerning which they pass a very different judgment. I know not any that are so hardy as even to excuse, much less defend *malicious* lies: that is, such as are told with a design to hurt any one: these are condemned by all parties. Men are more divided in their judgment, with regard to *harmless* lies, such as are supposed to do neither good nor harm. The generality of men, even in the Christian world, utter them without any scruple, and openly maintain, that if they do no harm to any one else, they do none to the speaker. Whether they do or not, they have certainly no place in the mouth of him that is *an Israelite indeed.* He cannot tell lies in jest, any more than in earnest; nothing but truth is heard from his mouth. He remembers the express command of God to the Ephesian Christians; "Putting away all lying, speak every man truth to his neighbour," Eph. iv. 15.

3. Concerning *officious* lies, those that are spoken with a design to do good, there have been numerous controversies in the Christian Church. Abundance of writers, and those men of renown for piety, as well as learning, have published whole volumes upon the subject, and in despite of all opposers, not only maintained them to be innocent, but commended them as meritorious. But what saith the Scripture? One passage is so express, that there does not need any other. It occurs in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the very words of the Apostle are, (ver. 7, 8,) "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I yet judged as a sinner?" (Will not that lie be excused from blame, for the good effect of it?) "And not rather, as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come? Whose damnation is just." Here the Apostle plainly declares, 1, That the good

effect of a lie is no excuse for it. 2, That it is a mere slander upon Christians to say, "They teach men to do evil that good may come." 3, That if any, in fact, do this, either teach men to do evil that good may come, or do so themselves, their damnation is just. This is peculiarly applicable to those who tell lies, in order to do good thereby. It follows, That officious lies, as well as all others, are an abomination to the God of Truth. Therefore, there is no absurdity, however strange it may sound, in that saying of the ancient Father, "I would not tell a wilful lie, to save the souls of the whole world."

4. The second thing which is implied in the character of *an Israelite indeed*, is *Sincerity*. As veracity is opposite to lying, so sincerity is to cunning. But it is not opposite to wisdom or discretion, which are well consistent with it. "But what is the difference between wisdom and cunning? Are they not almost, if not quite the same thing?" By no means. The difference between them is exceedingly great. Wisdom is the faculty of discerning the best ends, and the fittest means of attaining them. The end of every rational creature is God: the enjoying him in time and in eternity. The best, indeed the only mean of attaining this end, is, "The faith that worketh by love." True *Prudence*, in the general sense of the word, is the same thing with wisdom. *Discretion* is but another name for prudence: if it be not rather a part of it: as it is sometimes referred to our outward behaviour, and means, the ordering our words and actions right. On the contrary, cunning (so it is usually termed amongst common men, but policy among the great) is in plain terms, neither better nor worse than the art of deceiving. If therefore, it be any wisdom at all, it is "the wisdom from beneath:" springing from the bottomless pit, and leading down to the place from whence it came.

5. The two great means which cunning uses in order to deceive, are, *Simulation* and *Dissimulation*. Simulation is, the seeming to be what we are not: Dissimulation, the seeming not to be what we are: according to the old verse,

Quod non est, simulo: dissimuloque quod est. Both the one and the other we commonly term, the hanging out of false colours. Innumerable are the shapes that simulation puts on, in order to deceive. And almost as many are used by dissimulation for the same purpose. But the man of sincerity shuns them, and always appears exactly what he is.

6. "But suppose we are engaged with artful men, may we not use silence or reserve, especially if they ask insidious questions, without falling under the imputation of cunning?" Undoubtedly we may; nay, we ought on many occasions, either wholly to keep silence, or to speak with more or less reserve, as circumstances may require. To say nothing at all is, in many cases consistent with the highest sincerity. And so it is, to speak with reserve, to say only a part, perhaps a small part of what we know. But were we to pretend it to be the whole, this would be contrary to sincerity.

7. A more difficult question than this is, May we not speak the truth in order to deceive? Like him of old, who broke out into that exclamation, applauding his own ingenuity, "Hoc ego mihi puto palmarium, ut vera dicendo eos ambos fallam." This I take to be my master-piece to deceive them both, by speaking the truth. I answer, A Heathen might pique himself upon this; but a Christian could not. For although this is not contrary to veracity, yet it certainly is to sincerity. It is, therefore, the most excellent way, if we judge it proper to speak at all, to put away both simulation and dissimulation, and to speak the naked truth from our heart.

8. Perhaps this is properly termed *simplicity*. It goes a little farther than sincerity itself. It implies not only, first, The speaking no known falsehood; and, secondly, The not designedly deceiving any one; but thirdly, the speaking plainly and artlessly to every one when we speak at all: the speaking as little children, in a childlike, though not a childish manner. Does not this utterly exclude the using

any *compliments?* A vile word, the very sound of which I abhor: quite agreeing with our Poet,

——————"It never was a good day,
Since lowly fawning was called compliment."

I advise men of sincerity and simplicity never to take that silly word into their mouths; but labour to keep at the utmost distance both from the name and the thing.

9. Not long before that remarkable time,

"When statesmen sent a Prelate cross the seas,
By long-fam'd act of Pains and Penalties,"

several Bishops attacked Bishop Atterbury at once, then Bishop of Rochester, and asked, "My Lord, why will you not suffer your servants to deny you, when you do not care to see company? It is not a lie for them to say, Your Lordship is not at home. For it deceives no one. Every one knows it means only, Your Lordship is busy." He replied, "My Lords, if it is (which I doubt) consistent with sincerity, yet I am sure, it is not consistent with that simplicity which becomes a Christian Bishop."

10. But to return. The sincerity and simplicity of him in whom is no guile, have likewise an influence on his whole behaviour: they give a colour to his whole outward conversation: which, though it be far remote from every thing of clownishness, and ill-breeding, of roughness and surliness, yet is plain and artless, and free from all disguise, being the very picture of his heart. The truth and love which continually reign there, produce an open front, and a serene countenance: such as leave no pretence to say, with that arrogant King of Castile, "When God made man, he left one capital defect: he ought to have set a window in his breast;" for he opens a window in his own breast, by the whole tenor of his words and actions.

11. This then is real, genuine, solid virtue. Not truth alone, nor conformity to truth. This is a property of real virtue; not the essence of it. Not love alone: though this comes nearer the mark: for *love* in one sense *is the fulfilling of the law.* No: truth and love united together are the

essence of virtue or holiness. God indispensably requires "truth in the inward parts," influencing all our words and actions. Yet truth itself, separate from love, is nothing in his sight. But let the humble, gentle, patient love of all mankind, be fixed on its right foundation, namely, the love of God springing from faith, from a full conviction that God hath given his only Son to die for *my* sins: and then the whole will resolve into that grand conclusion, worthy of all men to be received, "Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by love."

SERMON XCVI.

ON CHARITY.

1 CORINTHIANS XIII. 1, 2, 3.

" *Though I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal.*

" *And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so as to remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing.*

" *And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*"

WE know, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and is, therefore, true and right concerning all things. But we know, likewise, that there are some scriptures which more immediately commend themselves to every man's conscience. In this rank we may place the passage before us: there are scarcely any that object to it. On the contrary, the generality of men very readily appeal to it. Nothing is more common than to find even those who deny the authority of the Holy Scriptures, yet affirming, "This is my religion: that which is described in the thirteenth chapter of the Corinthians." Nay, even a Jew, Dr. Nunes, a Spanish Physician, then settled at Savannah,

in Georgia, used to say, with great earnestness, "*That Paul of Tarsus* was one of the finest writers I have ever read. I wish the thirteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, were written in letters of gold. And I wish every Jew were to carry it with him wherever he went." He judged, (and herein he certainly judged right,) that this single chapter contained the whole of true Religion. It contains "whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely: if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," it is all contained in this.

In order to see this in the clearest light, we may consider,

I. What the Charity here spoken of is:

II. What those Things are which are usually put in the place of it. We may then,

III. Observe, that neither of them, nor all of them put together, can supply the want of it.

I. 1. We are, first, to consider, What this Charity is? What is the Nature, and what are the Properties of it?

St. Paul's word is Αγαπη, exactly answering to the plain English word *Love*. And accordingly it is so rendered in all the old translations of the Bible. So it stood in William Tindal's Bible, which, I suppose, was the first English translation of the whole Bible. So it was also in the Bible published by the authority of King Henry VIII. So it was likewise, in all the editions of the Bible that were successively published in England during the reign of King Edward VI., Queen Elizabeth, and King James I. Nay, so it is found in the Bibles of King Charles the First's reign: I believe, to the period of it. The first Bibles I have seen wherein the word was changed, were those printed by Roger Daniel and John Field, Printers to the Parliament, in the year 1649. Hence it seems probable that the alteration was made during the sitting of the Long Parliament: probably it was then that the Latin word Charity was put in place of the English word *Love*. It was in an unhappy hour this alteration was made; the ill

effects of it remain to this day: and these may be observed, not only among the poor and illiterate: not only thousands of common men and women, no more understand the word Charity, than they do the original Greek; but the same miserable mistake has diffused itself among men of education and learning. Thousands of these are misled thereby, and imagine that the Charity treated of in this chapter refers chiefly, if not wholly, to outward actions, and to mean little more than Almsgiving! I have heard many Sermons preached upon this chapter: particularly before the University of Oxford. And I never heard more than one, wherein the meaning of it was not totally misrepresented. But had the old and proper word *Love* been retained, there would have been no room for misrepresentation.

2. But what kind of Love is that whereof the Apostle is speaking throughout the chapter? Many persons of eminent learning and piety, apprehend that it is the Love of God. But from reading the whole chapter numberless times, and considering it in every light, I am thoroughly persuaded that what St. Paul is here directly speaking of, is the Love of our Neighbour. I believe whoever carefully weighs the whole tenor of his discourse, will be fully convinced of this. But it must be allowed to be such a love of our neighbour, as can only spring from the love of God. And whence does this love of God flow? Only from that faith which is of the operation of God; which whoever has, has a direct evidence, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." When this is particularly applied to his heart, so that he can say, with humble boldness, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:" then, and not till then, "the love of God is shed abroad in his heart." And this love sweetly constrains him to love every child of man with the love which is here spoken of: not with a love of esteem or of complacence; for this can have no place with regard to those, who are (if not his personal enemies, yet) enemies to God and their own souls; but with a love

of benevolence, of tender good-will to all the souls that God has made.

3. But it may be asked, "If there be no true love of our neighbour, but that which springs from the love of God; and if the love of God flows from no other fountain than faith in the Son of God: does it not follow that the whole heathen world is excluded from all possibility of salvation? Seeing they are cut off from faith: for faith cometh by hearing. And how shall they hear without a Preacher?" I answer, St. Paul's words, spoken on another occasion, are applicable to this, "What the law speaketh, it speaketh to them that are under the law." Accordingly that sentence, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is spoken of them to whom the gospel is preached. Others it does not concern: and we are not required to determine any thing touching their final state. How it will please God, the Judge of all, to deal with *them*, we may leave to God himself. But this we know, that he is not the God of the Christians only, but the God of the Heathens also: that he is "rich in mercy to all that call upon him," according to the light they have: and that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

4. But to return. This is the *Nature* of that *Love*, whereof the Apostle is here speaking. But what are the Properties of it, the Fruits which are inseparable from it? The Apostle reckons up many of them; but the principal of them are these.

First, *Love is not puffed up.* As is the measure of love, so is the measure of humility. Nothing humbles the soul so deeply as love: it casts out all "high conceits, engendering pride," all arrogance and over-weening, makes us little, and poor, and base, and vile in our own eyes. It abases us both before God and man; makes us willing to be the least of all, and the servants of all, and teaches us to say, "A mote in the sun-beam is little, but I am infinitely less in the presence of God."

5. Secondly, *Love is not provoked.* Our present English translation renders it, *is not easily provoked.* But how did

the word *easily* come in? There is not a tittle of it in the text: the words of the Apostle are simply these, ου παροξυνεται. Is it not probable, it was inserted by the translators with a design to excuse St. Paul, for fear his practice should appear to contradict his doctrine? For we read, Acts xv. 36, and seq. "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city, where we have preached the Word of the LORD, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose sirname was Mark. But Paul thought not good, to take with them one who departed from the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus: and Paul chose Silas, and departed; being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches."

6. Would not any one think on reading these words, that they were both equally sharp? That Paul was just as hot as Barnabas, and as much wanting in love as he? But the text says no such thing, as will be plain, if we consider first the occasion. When St. Paul proposed, that they should "again visit the brethren in every city, where they had preached the word," so far they were agreed. "And Barnabas determined to take with them John," because he was his sister's son, without receiving or asking St. Paul's advice. "But Paul thought not good to take him with them who had departed from them from Pamphylia," (whether through sloth or cowardice,) "and went not with them to the work." And undoubtedly he thought right: he had reason on his side. The following words are και εγενετο παροξυσμος; literally, "And there was a fit of anger." It does not say, in St. Paul, probably it was in Barnabas alone, who thus supplied the want of reason with passion; "so that they parted asunder." *And Barnabas* resolved to have his own way, did as his nephew had done before, "departed from the work," "took Mark with him, and sailed to Cyprus." But Paul went on his work, "being

recommended by the brethren to the grace of God:" (which Barnabas seems not to have stayed for.) "And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches." From the whole account, it does not appear that St. Paul was in any fault: that he either felt any temper, or spoke any word contrary to the law of love. Therefore, not being in any fault, he does not need any excuse.

7. Certainly he who is full of love is "gentle towards all men." He, "in meekness, instructs those that oppose themselves," that oppose what he loves most, even the truth of God, or that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord: not knowing but "God peradventure may bring them to the knowledge of the truth." However provoked, he does "not return evil for evil, or railing for railing." Yea, he "blesses those that curse him, and does good to them that despitefully use him and persecute him." He "is not overcome of evil, but" always "overcomes evil with good."

8. Thirdly, *Love is long-suffering*. It *endures* not a few affronts, reproaches, injuries: but *all things* which God is pleased to permit either men or devils to inflict. It arms the soul with inviolable patience: and not harsh stoical patience, but yielding as the air, which making no resistance to the stroke, receives no harm thereby. The lover of mankind remembers him who suffered for us, "leaving us an example that we might tread in his steps." Accordingly, "if his enemy hunger, he feeds him, if he thirst, he gives him drink;" and by so doing, he heaps coals of fire, of melting love, upon his head. "And many waters cannot quench this love: neither can the floods" of ingratitude "drown it."

II. 1. We are, secondly, to enquire, What those things are, which, it is commonly supposed, will supply the place of love. And the first of these is Eloquence: a faculty of talking well, particularly on religious subjects. Men are generally inclined to think well of one that talks well. If he speaks properly and fluently of God, and the things of God, who can doubt of his being in God's favour? And

it is very natural for him to think well of himself, to have as favourable an opinion of himself as others have.

2. But men of reflection are not satisfied with this: they are not content with a flood of words, they prefer thinking before talking, and judge, one that knows much is far preferable to one that talks much. And it is certain, Knowledge is an excellent gift of God; particularly knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which are contained all the depths of divine knowledge and wisdom. Hence it is generally thought that a man of much knowledge, knowledge of Scripture in particular, must not only be in the favour of God, but likewise enjoy a high degree of it.

3. But men of deeper reflection are apt to say, "I lay no stress upon any other knowledge, but the knowledge of God by Faith. Faith is the only knowledge, which, in the sight of God, is of great price. "We are saved by faith;" by faith alone: this is the one thing needful. He that believeth, and he alone, shall be saved everlastingly." There is much truth in this: it is unquestionably true, that "we are saved by faith:" consequently, That "he that believeth, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

4. But some men will say, with the Apostle James, "Shew me thy faith without thy works," (if thou canst; but indeed it is impossible,) "and I will shew thee my faith by my works." And many are induced to think that good works, works of piety and mercy, are of far more consequence than faith itself, and will supply the want of every other qualification for heaven. Indeed this seems to be the general sentiment, not only of the members of the Church of Rome, but of Protestants also; not of the giddy and thoughtless, but the serious members of our own Church.

5. And it cannot be denied that our Lord himself hath said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits:" by their works ye know them that believe, and them that believe not. But yet it may be doubted, whether there is not a surer proof of the sincerity of our faith, than even our

works: and that is, our willingly suffering for righteousness' sake: especially if, after suffering reproach, and pain, and loss of friends and substance, a man gives up life itself, yea, by a shameful, and painful death, by giving his body to be burned, rather than he would give up faith and a good conscience, by neglecting his known duty.

6. It is proper to observe here, first, What a beautiful gradation there is, each step rising above the other, in the enumeration of those several things, which some or other of those that are called Christians, and are usually accounted so, really believe will supply the absence of love. St. Paul begins at the lowest point, *talking well*, and advances step by step, every one rising higher than the preceding, till he comes to the highest of all. A step above eloquence is knowledge: faith is a step above this. Good Works are a step above that faith. And even above this, is Suffering for righteousness' sake. Nothing is higher than this but Christian love: the love of our neighbour flowing from the love of God.

7. It may be proper to observe, secondly, That whatever passes for religion in any part of the Christian world, (whether it be a part of religion, or no part at all, but either folly, superstition, or wickedness,) may with very little difficulty be reduced to one or other of these heads. Every thing which is supposed to be religion, either by Protestants or Romanists, and is not, is contained under one or another of these five particulars. Make trial, as often as you please, with any thing that is called religion, but improperly so called, and you will find the rule to hold without any exception.

III. 1. I am now, in the third place, to demonstrate, to all who have ears to hear, who do not harden themselves against conviction, that neither any one of these five qualifications, nor all of them together, will avail any thing before God, without the love above described.

In order to do this in the clearest manner, we may consider them one by one. And, first, *Though I speak with the*

tongues of men and of angels: with an eloquence such as never was found in men, concerning the nature, attributes, and works of God, whether of creation or providence: though I were not herein a whit behind the chief of the Apostles, preaching like St. Peter, and praying like St. John; yet unless humble, gentle, patient love, be the ruling temper of my soul, I *am* no better in the judgment of God, "than sounding brass, or a rumbling cymbal." The highest eloquence, therefore, either in private conversation, or in public ministrations; the brightest talents either for preaching or prayer, if they were not joined with humble, meek, and patient resignation, might sink me the deeper into hell, but will not bring me one step nearer heaven.

2. A plain instance may illustrate this. I knew a young man between fifty and sixty years ago, who during the course of several years, never endeavoured to convince any one of a religious truth, but he *was* convinced: and he never endeavoured to persuade any one to engage in a religious practice, but he was persuaded; what then? All that power of convincing speech, all that force of persuasion, if it was not joined with meekness and lowliness, with resignation and patient love, would no more qualify him for the fruition of God, than a clear voice, or a fine complexion. Nay, it would rather procure him a hotter place in everlasting burnings.

3. Secondly, *Though I have the gift of prophecy*, of foretelling those future events which no creature can foresee; and *though I understand all* the *mysteries* of nature, of providence, and the word of God: and *have all knowledge* of things, divine or human, that any mortal ever attained to: though I can explain the most mysterious passages of Daniel, of Ezekiel, and the Revelation: yet if I have not humility, gentleness, and resignation, I *am nothing* in the sight of God.

A little before the conclusion of the late war in Flanders, one who came from thence gave us a very strange relation. I knew not what judgment to form of this; but waited till

John Haime should come over, of whose veracity I could no more doubt, than of his understanding. The account he gave was this.—" Jonathan Pyrah was a member of our Society in Flanders. I knew him some years, and knew him to be a man of unblamable character. One day he was summoned to appear before the Board of General Officers. One of them said, What is this which we hear of you? We hear you are turned prophet, and that you foretel the downfal of the bloody House of Bourbon, and the haughty house of Austria. We should be glad if you were a real prophet, and if your prophecies came true. But what sign do you give, to convince us you are so; and that your predictions will come to pass? He readily answered, 'Gentlemen, I give you a sign. To-morrow at twelve o'clock, you shall have such a storm of thunder and lightning, as you never had before since you came into Flanders. I give you a second sign: as little as any of you expect any such thing, as little appearance of it as there is now, you shall have a general engagement with the French within three days. I give you a third sign: I shall be ordered to advance in the first line. If I am a false prophet, I shall be shot dead at the first discharge. But if I am a true prophet I shall only receive a musket-ball in the calf of my left leg.' At twelve the next day there was such thunder and lightning as they never had before in Flanders. On the third day, contrary to all expectation, was the general battle of Fontenoy. He was ordered to advance in the first line. And at the very first discharge, he received a musket ball in the calf of his left leg."

4. And yet all this profited him nothing, either for temporal or eternal happiness. When the war was over, he returned to England; but the story was got before him: in consequence of which he was sent for by the Countess of St———s, and several other persons of quality, who were desirous to receive so surprising an account from his own mouth. He could not bear so much honour. It quite turned his brain. In a little time he ran stark mad. And

so he continues to this day, living still, as I apprehend, on Wibsey Moorside, within a few miles of Leeds.*

5. And what would it profit a man to have all knowledge, even that which is infinitely preferable to all other, the knowledge of the Holy Scripture? I knew a young man about twenty years ago, who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible, that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh.† Such a master of Biblical knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again. Yet if with all his knowledge he had been void of love, if he had been proud, passionate, or impatient, he and all his knowledge would have perished together, as sure as ever he was born.

6. *And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains.*—The faith which is able to do this, cannot be the fruit of vain imagination, a mere madman's dream, a system of opinions; but must be a real work of God. Otherwise it could not have such an effect. Yet if this faith do not work by love, if it do not produce universal holiness, if it do not bring forth lowliness, meekness, and resignation, it will profit me nothing. This is as certain a truth as any that is delivered in the whole oracles of God. All faith that is, that was, or ever can be, separate from tender benevolence to every child of man, friend or foe, Christian, Jew, Heretic, or Pagan; separate from gentleness to all men; separate from resignation in all events, and contentedness in all conditions; is not the faith of a Christian, and will stand us in no stead before the face of God.

7. Hear ye this, All you that are called Methodists. You of all men living, are most concerned herein. You constantly speak of salvation by faith: and you are in the right

* At the time of writing this Sermon. He is since dead.

† His Journal written by himself, is extant.

for so doing. You maintain, (one and all,) that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law. And you cannot do otherwise, without giving up the Bible, and betraying your own souls. You insist upon it, that we are saved by faith: and, undoubtedly, so we are. But consider, mean time, that let us have ever so much faith, and be our faith ever so strong, it will never save us from hell, unless it now save us from all unholy tempers; from pride, passion, impatience: from all arrogance of spirit, all haughtiness and over-bearing: from wrath, anger, bitterness: from discontent, murmuring, fretfulness, peevishness. We are of all men most inexcusable, if having been so frequently guarded against that strong delusion, we still, while we indulge any of these tempers, bless ourselves and dream we are in the way to heaven!

8. Fourthly, "Although I give all my goods to the poor, though I divide all my real, and all my personal estate into small portions, (so the original word properly signifies,) and diligently bestow it on those who, I have reason to believe, are the most proper objects: yet if I am proud, passionate, or discontented; if I give way to any of these tempers; whatever good I may do to others, I do none to my own soul. O how pitiable a case is this! Who would not grieve, that these beneficent men should lose all their labour! It is true, many of them have a reward in this world, if not before, yet after their death. They have costly and pompous funerals. They have marble monuments of the most exquisite workmanship. They have epitaphs, written in the most elegant strain, which extol their virtues to the skies. Perhaps they have yearly orations spoken over them, to transmit their memory to all generations. So have many founders of religious Houses, Colleges, Alms-houses, and most charitable institutions. And it is an allowed rule, that none can exceed in the praise of the Founder of his House, College, or Hospital. But still what a poor reward is this! Will it add to their comfort or to their misery, suppose, (which must be the case if they did not die in the faith,) that they are in the

hands of the devil and his angels! What insults, what cutting reproaches would these occasion, from their infernal companions! O that they were wise! that all those who are zealous of good works, would put them in their proper place! would not imagine, they can supply the want of holy tempers; but take care that they spring from them!

9. How exceedingly strange must this sound in the ears of most of those who are, by the courtesy of England, called Christians! But stranger still is that assertion of the Apostle, which comes in the last place: "Although I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Although rather than deny the faith, rather than commit a known sin, or omit a known duty, I voluntarily submit to a cruel death, "deliver up my body to be burned:" yet if I am under the power of pride, or anger, or fretfulness, "it profiteth me nothing."

10. Perhaps this may be illustrated by an example. We have a remarkable account in the Tracts of Dr. Geddes, (a Civilian, who was Envoy from Queen Ann to the Court of Portugal, in the latter end of her reign.) He was present at one of those *Auto de Fes*, (Acts of Faith,) wherein the Roman Inquisitors burnt Heretics alive. One of the persons who was then brought out for execution, having been confined in the dungeons of the Inquisition, had not seen the sun for many years. It proved a bright sun-shiny day. Looking up, he cried out in surprise, "O how can any one who sees that glorious luminary, worship any but the God that made it!" A Friar standing by, ordered them to run an iron gag through his lips, that he might speak no more. Now what did that poor man feel within when this order was executed? If he said in his heart, though he could not utter it with his lips, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," undoubtedly the angels of God were ready to carry his soul into Abraham's bosom. But if, instead of this, he cherished the resentment in his heart, which he could not express with his tongue, although his body was consumed by the flames, I will not say his soul went to Paradise.

11. The sum of all that has been observed is this, Whatever I speak, whatever I know, whatever I believe, whatever I do, whatever I suffer: if I have not the faith that worketh by love, that produces love to God and all mankind, I am not in the narrow way which leadeth to life; but in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. In other words: whatever eloquence I have: whatever natural or supernatural knowledge; whatever faith I have received from God: whatever works I do, whether of piety or mercy; whatever sufferings I undergo for conscience' sake, even though I resist unto blood: all these things put together, however applauded of men, will avail nothing before God, unless I am meek and lowly in heart, and can say, in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt."

12. We conclude from the whole, (and it can never be too much inculcated, because all the world votes on the other side,) That true religion, in the very essence of it, is nothing short of *holy tempers*. Consequently all other religion, whatever name it bears, whether Pagan, Mahometan, Jewish, or Christian: and whether Popish or Protestant, Lutheran or Reformed, without these, is lighter than vanity itself.

13. Let every man, therefore, that has a soul to be saved, see that he secure this one point. With all his eloquence, his knowledge, his faith, works, and sufferings, let him hold fast this *one thing needful*. He that through the power of faith, endureth to the end in humble, gentle, patient love; he and he alone, shall, through the merits of Christ, "inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world."

SERMON XCVII.

ON ZEAL.

GALATIANS IV. 18.

"*It is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing.*"

1. THERE are few subjects in the whole compass of religion, that are of greater importance than this. For without Zeal it is impossible, either to make any considerable progress in religion ourselves, or to do any considerable service to our neighbour, whether in temporal or spiritual things. And yet nothing has done more disservice to religion, or more mischief to mankind, than a sort of Zeal, which has for several ages prevailed, both in Pagan, Mahometan, and Christian nations. Insomuch that it may truly be said, pride, covetousness, ambition, revenge, have in all parts of the world slain their thousands: but Zeal its ten thousands. Terrible instances of this have occurred in ancient times, in the most civilized Heathen nations. To this chiefly were owing the inhuman persecutions of the primitive Christians: and in later ages, the no less inhuman persecutions of the Protestants, by the Church of Rome. It was Zeal that kindled fires in our nation, during the reign of bloody Queen Mary. It was Zeal that soon after made so many provinces of France a field of blood. It was Zeal that murdered so many thousands of unresisting Protestants, in the never-to-be-forgotten massacre of Paris. It was

Zeal that occasioned the still more horrid massacre in Ireland; the like whereof, both with regard to the number of the murdered, and the shocking circumstances wherewith many of those murders were perpetrated, I verily believe never occurred before, since the world began. As to the other parts of Europe, an eminent German Writer has taken immense pains, to search both the records, in various places, and the most authentic histories, in order to gain some competent knowledge of the blood which has been shed since the Reformation. And computes, that partly by private persecution, partly by religious wars in the course of forty years, reckoning from the year 1520, above forty millions of persons have been destroyed!

2. But is it not possible to distinguish right Zeal from wrong? Undoubtedly it is possible. But it is difficult: such is the deceitfulness of the human heart! So skilfully do the passions justify themselves! And there are exceeding few treatises on the subject; at least, in the English language. To this day I have seen, or heard of only one Sermon; and that was written above a hundred years ago, by Dr. Spratt, then Bishop of Rochester, so that it is now exceeding scarce.

3. I would gladly cast in my mite, by God's assistance, toward the clearing up this important question, in order to enable well-meaning men, who are desirous of pleasing God, to distinguish true Christian Zeal from its various counterfeits. And this is more necessary at this time than it has been for many years. Sixty years ago there seemed to be scarce any such thing as religious Zeal left in the nation. People in general, were wonderfully cool and undisturbed about *that trifle, Religion*. But since then, it is easy to observe, there has been a very considerable alteration. Many thousands, almost in every part of the nation, have felt a real desire to save their souls. And I am persuaded there is at this day more religious Zeal in England, than there has been for a century past.

4. But has this Zeal been of the right or the wrong kind? Probably both the one and the other. Let us see

if we cannot separate these, that we may avoid the latter and cleave to the former. In order to this, I would enquire,

I. What is the nature of true, Christian Zeal?
II. What are the Properties of it? And,
III. Draw some practical Inferences.

I. And, first, What is the nature of Zeal in general, and of true Christian Zeal in particular.

1. The original word, in its primary signification, means *heat*, such as the heat of boiling water. When it is figuratively applied to the mind, it means any warm emotion or affection. Sometimes it is taken for *envy*. So we render it, Acts v. 17, where we read, "The High-Priest, and all that were with him, were filled with envy:" επλησθησαν ζηλου· (although it might as well be rendered, *were filled with Zeal.*) Sometimes, it is taken for anger and indignation; sometimes, for vehement desire. And when any of our passions are strongly moved on a religious account, whether for any thing good, or against any thing which we conceive to be evil, this we term, *religious Zeal.*

2. But it is not all that is called religious Zeal, which is worthy of that name. It is not properly religious or Christian Zeal, if it be not joined with Charity. A fine Writer, (Bishop Spratt,) carries the matter farther still. "It has been affirmed," says that great man, "No Zeal is right, which is not charitable, but is mostly so. Charity or love is not only one ingredient, but the chief ingredient in its composition." May we not go further still? May we not say, that true Zeal is not mostly charitable, but wholly so? That is, if we take Charity in St. Paul's sense, for love; the love of God and our neighbour. For it is a certain truth, (although little understood in the world,) that Christian Zeal is all love. It is nothing else. The love of God and man fills up its whole nature.

3. Yet it is not every degree of that love, to which this appellation is given. There may be some love, a small degree of it, where there is no Zeal. But it is properly, love in a higher degree. It is *fervent love.* True Christian Zeal

is no other than *the flame of love.* This is the nature, the inmost essence of it.

II. 1. From hence it follows, that the properties of love, are the properties of Zeal also. Now one of the chief properties of love, is *Humility: love is not puffed up.* Accordingly this is a property of true Zeal: humility is inseparable from it. As is the degree of Zeal, such is the degree of humility: they must rise and fall together. The same love which fills a man with zeal for God, makes him little, and poor, and vile in his own eyes.

2. Another of the properties of love is *Meekness:* consequently it is one of the properties of Zeal. It teaches us to be meek, as well as lowly: to be equally superior to anger or pride. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, so before this sacred flame, all turbulent passions melt away, and leave the soul unruffled and serene.

3. Yet another property of love, and consequently of Zeal, is unwearied *Patience;* for "love endureth all things." It arms the soul with entire resignation to all the disposals of divine Providence, and teaches us to say, in every occurrence, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." It enables us, in whatever station, therewith to be content: to repine at nothing; to murmur at nothing; "but in every thing to give thanks."

4. There is a fourth property of Christian Zeal; which deserves to be more particularly considered. This we learn from the very words of the Apostle, "It is good to be zealously affected," (not to have transient touches of zeal, but a steady rooted disposition,) "in a good thing:" in that which is good; for the proper object of Zeal, is good in general. That is, every thing that is good, really such, in the sight of God.

5. But what is good in the sight of God? What is that religion, wherewith God is always well pleased? How do the parts of this rise one above another? And what is the comparative value of them?

This is a point exceedingly little considered, and, therefore, little understood. Positive divinity, many have some

knowledge of. But few know any thing of comparative divinity. I never saw but one tract written upon this head: a sketch of which it may be of use to subjoin.

In a Christian believer *love* sits upon the throne, which is erected in the inmost soul: namely, love to God and man, which fills the whole heart, and reigns without a rival. In a circle near the throne, are all *holy tempers;* long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, fidelity, temperance: and if any other were comprised in *the mind which was in Christ Jesus.* In an exterior circle are all the *works of mercy,* whether to the souls or bodies of men. By these we exercise all holy tempers; by these we continually improve them, so that all these are real *means of grace,* although this is not commonly adverted to. Next to these are those that are usually termed *works of piety:* reading and hearing the word, public, family, private prayer, receiving the Lord's supper, fasting or abstinence. Lastly, that his followers may the more effectually provoke one another to love, holy tempers, and good works, our blessed Lord has united them together in one body, *the Church,* dispersed all over the earth; a little emblem of which, of the Church universal, we have in every particular Christian congregation.

6. This is that religion which our Lord has established upon earth, ever since the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This is the entire, connected system of Christianity: and thus the several parts of it rise one above another, from that lowest point, *the assembling ourselves together,* to the highest, love enthroned in the heart. And hence it is easy to learn the comparative value of every branch of religion. Hence also we learn a fifth property of true Zeal. That as it is always exercised εν καλω, *that which is good,* so it is always *proportioned* to that good, to the degree of goodness that is in its object.

7. For example. Every Christian ought, undoubtedly, to be zealous for *the Church,* bearing a strong affection to it, and earnestly desiring its prosperity and increase. He ought to be thus zealous, as for the Church universal,

praying for it continually, so especially for that particular Church or Christian Society, whereof he himself is a member. For this he ought to wrestle with God in prayer; mean time using every mean in his power, to enlarge its borders, and to strengthen his brethren, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

8. But he should be more zealous for the *ordinances of Christ*, than for the Church itself: for prayer in public and private, for the Lord's Supper, for reading, hearing, and meditating on his word; and for the much neglected duty of fasting. These he should earnestly recommend; first, by his example, and then by advice, by argument, persuasion, and exhortation, as often as occasion offers.

9. Thus should he shew his Zeal for works of piety; but much more for *works of mercy;* seeing "God will have mercy and not sacrifice;" that is, rather than sacrifice. Whenever, therefore, one interferes with the other, works of mercy are to be preferred. Even reading, hearing, prayer, are to be omitted, or to be postponed, "at charity's almighty call:" when we are called to relieve the distress of our neighbour, whether in body or soul.

10. But as zealous as we are for all good works, we should still be more zealous for *holy tempers:* for planting and promoting in our souls, and in all we have any intercourse with, lowliness of mind, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, contentedness, resignation unto the Will of God, deadness to the world and the things of the world, as the only mean of being truly alive to God. For these proofs and fruits of living faith, we cannot be too zealous. We should "talk of them as we sit in our house," and "when we walk by the way," and "when we lie down," and "when we rise up." We should make them continual matter of prayer; as being far more excellent than any outward works whatever: seeing those will fail when the body drops off; but these will accompany us into eternity.

11. But our choicest Zeal should be reserved for *Love* itself, the end of the Commandment, the fulfilling of the law. The Church, the ordinances, outward works of every

kind, yea, all other holy tempers, are inferior to this, and rise in value, only as they approach nearer and nearer to it. Here then is the great object of Christian Zeal. Let every true believer in Christ, apply, with all fervency of spirit, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that his heart may be more and more enlarged in love to God and to all mankind. This one thing let him do: let him "press on to this prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

III. It remains only to draw some practical Inferences from the preceding Observations.

1. And first, if Zeal, true Christian Zeal, be nothing but the flame of love, then *hatred*, in every kind and degree, then every sort of *bitterness* toward them that oppose us, is so far from deserving the name of Zeal, that it is directly opposite to it. If Zeal be only fervent love, then it stands at the utmost distance from *prejudice*, jealousy, evil-surmising; seeing "love thinketh no evil." Then *bigotry* of every sort, and, above all, the spirit of *persecution*, are totally inconsistent with it. Let not, therefore, any of these unholy tempers screen themselves under that sacred name. As all these are the works of the devil, let them appear in their own shape, and no longer under that specious disguise, deceive the unwary children of God.

2. Secondly: If lowliness be a property of Zeal, then pride is inconsistent with it. It is true, some degree of pride may remain, after the love of God is shed abroad in the heart: as this is one of the last evils that is rooted out, when God creates all things new. But it cannot reign, nor retain any considerable power, where fervent love is found. Yea, were we to give way to it but a little, it would damp that holy fervour; and if we did not immediately fly back to Christ, would utterly quench the Spirit.

3. Thirdly: if meekness be an inseparable property of Zeal, what shall we say of those, who call their Anger by that name? Why, that they mistake the truth totally; that they, in the fullest sense, put darkness for light, and light for darkness. We cannot be too watchful against this delu-

sion, because it spreads over the whole Christian world. Almost in all places, Zeal and Anger pass for equivalent terms: and exceedingly few persons are convinced, that there is any difference between them. How commonly do we hear it said, "See how zealous the man is!" Nay, he cannot be zealous: that is impossible; for he is in a passion: and passion is as inconsistent with Zeal, as light with darkness, or heaven with hell.

It were well that this point were thoroughly understood. Let us consider it a little farther. We frequently observe one that bears the character of a religious man, vehemently angry at his neighbour. Perhaps he calls his brother *Raca*, or *Thou fool:* he brings a railing accusation against him. You mildly admonish him of his warmth. He answers, *It is my Zeal!* No: it is your sin; and unless you repent of it, it will sink you lower than the grave. There is much such Zeal as this in the bottomless pit. Thence all Zeal of this kind comes. And thither it will go, and you with it, unless you are saved from it, before you go hence.

4. Fourthly: If patience, contentedness, and resignation, are the properties of Zeal, then murmuring, fretfulness, discontent, impatience, are wholly inconsistent with it. And yet how ignorant are mankind of this! How often do we see men fretting at the ungodly, or telling you, They are *out of patience* with such or such things, and terming all this their Zeal! O spare no pains to undeceive them! If it be possible, shew them what zeal is: and convince them that all murmuring, or fretting at sin, is a species of sin, and has no resemblance of, or connexion with the true Zeal of the Gospel.

5. Fifthly: If the object of Zeal be *that which is good*, then fervor for any *evil thing* is not Christian Zeal. I instance in *idolatry*, worshipping of angels, saints, images, the cross. Although, therefore, a man were so earnestly attached to any kind of idolatrous worship, that he would even "give his body to be burned," rather than refrain from it, call this bigotry or superstition, if you please, but call it not Zeal; that is quite another thing.

From the same premises it follows, that fervor for *indifferent things*, is not Christian Zeal. But how exceedingly common is this mistake too! Indeed one would think, that men of understanding could not be capable of such weakness. But, alas! the history of all ages proves the contrary. Who were men of stronger understanding than Bishop Ridley, and Bishop Hooper? And how warmly did these, and other great men of that age, dispute about the *Sacerdotal Vestments!* How eager was the contention for almost a hundred years, for and against wearing a *Surplice!* O shame to man! I would as soon have disputed about a straw, or a barley-corn! And this, indeed, shall be called Zeal! And why was it not rather called wisdom, or holiness?

6. It follows also, from the same premises, That fervor for *opinions* is not Christian Zeal. But how few are sensible of this! And how innumerable are the mischiefs, which even this species of false Zeal has occasioned in the Christian world! How many thousands of lives have been cast away by those who were zealous for the Romish opinions! How many of the excellent ones of the earth have been cut off by zealots, for the senseless opinion of transubstantiation! But does not every unprejudiced person see, that this Zeal is *earthly*, *sensual*, and *devilish?* And that it stands at the utmost contrariety to that Zeal, which is here recommended by the Apostle?

What an excess of charity is it then which our great Poet expresses, in his Poem on the Last Day. Where he talks of meeting in heaven,

> "Those who by mutual wounds expir'd,
> By *Zeal* for their distinct persuasions fir'd."

Zeal indeed! What manner of zeal was this, which led them to cut one another's throats? Those who were *fired* with this spirit, and died therein, will, undoubtedly, have their portion, not in heaven; (only love is there,) but in the "fire that never shall be quenched."

7. Lastly: If true Zeal be always proportioned to the degree of goodness which is in its object, then should it rise

higher and higher according to the scale mentioned above; according to the comparative value of the several parts of religion. For instance, all that truly fear God should be zealous for the *Church;* both for the catholic or universal Church, and for that part of it whereof they are members. This is not the appointment of men, but of God. He saw, it was "not good for man to be alone," even in this sense, but that the whole body of his children should be "knit together, and strengthened, by that which every joint supplieth." At the same time they should be more zealous for the *ordinances* of God; for public and private prayer, for hearing and reading the Word of God, and for fasting, and the Lord's Supper. But they should be more zealous for *works* of mercy, than even for works of piety. Yet ought they to be more zealous still, for all *holy tempers*, lowliness, meekness, resignation: but most zealous of all, for that which is the sum and perfection of religion, the *Love* of God and Man.

8. It remains only, to make a close and honest application of these things to our own souls. We all know the general truth, That "it is good to be always zealously affected in a good thing." Let us now, every one of us, apply it to his own soul in particular.

9. Those indeed who are still dead in trespasses and sins, have neither part nor lot in this matter: nor those that live in any open sin, such as drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, or profane swearing. These have nothing to do with Zeal: they have no business at all even to take the word in their mouths. It is utter folly and impertinence for any to talk of Zeal for God, while he is doing the works of the devil. But if you have renounced the devil and all his works, and have settled it in your heart, I will "worship the Lord my God, and him only will I serve," then beware of being neither cold nor hot: then be zealous for God. You may begin at the lowest step. Be zealous for *the Church;* more especially, for that particular branch thereof, wherein your lot is cast. Study the welfare of this, and carefully observe all the rules of it, for conscience' sake. But, in the mean

time, take heed that you do not neglect any of the *ordinances* of God; for the sake of which, in a great measure, the Church itself was constituted: so that it would be highly absurd, to talk of Zeal for the Church, if you were not more zealous for them. But are you more zealous for *works of mercy*, than even for works of piety? Do *you* follow the example of your Lord, and prefer mercy even before sacrifice? Do you use all diligence in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting them that are sick and in prison? And, above all, do you use every mean in your power to save souls from death? If, as you have time, "you do good unto all men," though "especially to them that are of the household of faith," your Zeal for the Church is pleasing to God: but if not, if you are not "careful to maintain good works," what have you to do with the Church? If you have not "compassion on your fellow-servants," neither will your Lord have pity on *you*. "Bring no more vain oblations." All your service is "an abomination to the Lord."

10. Are you better instructed than to put asunder what God has joined? Than to separate works of piety from works of mercy? Are you uniformly zealous of both? So far you walk acceptably to God: that is, if you continually bear in mind, that God "searcheth the heart and reins:" that "he is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth:" that consequently no outward works are acceptable to him, unless they spring from *holy tempers*, without which no man can have a place in the kingdom of Christ and God.

11. But of all holy tempers, and above all others, see that you be most zealous for *Love*. Count all things loss in comparison of this, the Love of God and all mankind. It is most sure, that if you give all your goods to feed the poor, yea, and your body to be burned, and have not humble, gentle, patient Love, it profiteth you nothing. O let this be deeply engraven upon your heart: all is nothing without Love.

12. Take then the whole of religion together, just as

God has revealed it in his Word, and be uniformly zealous for every part of it, according to its degree of excellence, grounding all your zeal on the one foundation, "Jesus Christ and him crucified:" holding fast this one principle, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:" proportion your zeal to the value of its object. Be calmly zealous, therefore, first, for the *Church;* "the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth," and in particular for that branch thereof, with which you are more immediately connected. Be more zealous for all those *Ordinances* which our blessed Lord hath appointed, to continue therein to the end of the world. Be more zealous for those *Works of Mercy*, those "sacrifices wherewith God is well-pleased," those marks whereby the Shepherd of Israel will know his sheep at the last day. Be more zealous still for *holy tempers*, for *long-suffering*, *gentleness*, *meekness*, *lowliness*, and *resignation:* but be most zealous of all for *Love*, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God, as in men below, so in angels above. For "God is Love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

SERMON XCVIII.

ON REDEEMING TIME.

EPHESIANS V. 16.

"Redeeming the Time."

1. "SEE that ye walk circumspectly," says the Apostle in the preceding verse, "not as fools, but as wise men: redeeming the time;" saving all the time you can for the best purposes; buying up every fleeting moment, out of the hands of sin and Satan, out of the hands of sloth, ease, pleasure, worldly business; the more diligently, because the present *are evil days*, days of the grossest ignorance, immorality, and profaneness.

2. This seems to be the general meaning of the words. But I purpose, at present, to consider only one particular way of "redeeming the time," namely, from Sleep.

3. This appears to have been exceedingly little considered even by pious men. Many that have been eminently conscientious in other respects, have not been so in this. They seemed to think it an indifferent thing, whether they slept more or less, and never saw it in the true point of view, as an important branch of Christian Temperance.

That we may have a more just conception hereof, I will endeavour to shew,

I. What it is to *redeem the Time* from Sleep.

II. The Evil of not redeeming it. And,

III. The most effectual Manner of doing it.

I. 1. And, first, What is it to *redeem the Time from Sleep?* It is, in general, to take that measure of sleep every night, which nature requires, and no more: that measure which is most conducive to the health and vigour both of the body and mind.

2. But it is objected, "One measure will not suit all men: some require considerably more than others. Neither will the same measure suffice even the same persons, at one time as at another. When a person is sick, or if not actually so, yet weakened by preceding sickness, he certainly wants more of this natural restorative, than he did when in perfect health. And so he will, when his strength and spirits are exhausted, by hard or long-continued labour."

3. All this is unquestionably true, and confirmed by a thousand experiments. Whoever, therefore, they are that have attempted to fix one measure of sleep for all persons, did not understand the nature of the human body, so widely different in different persons: as neither did they, who imagined that the same measure would suit even the same person at all times. One would wonder, therefore, that so great a man as Bishop Taylor, should have formed this strange imagination: much more that the measure which he has assigned for the general standard, should be only three hours in four and twenty. That good and sensible man, Mr. Baxter, was not much nearer the truth: who supposes four hours in four and twenty will suffice for any man. I know an extremely sensible man, who was absolutely persuaded, that no one living needed to sleep above five hours in twenty-four. But when he made the experiment himself, he quickly relinquished the opinion. And I am fully convinced, from an observation continued for more than fifty years, that whatever may be done by extraordinary persons, or in some extraordinary cases, (wherein persons have subsisted with very little sleep for some weeks, or even months,) a human body can scarcely continue in health

and vigour, without, at least, six hours sleep in four and twenty. Sure I am, I never met with such an instance: I never found either man or woman that retained vigorous health for one year, with a less quantity of sleep than this.

4. And I have long observed, that women, in general, want a little more sleep than men: perhaps, because they are, in common, of a weaker, as well as a moister habit of body. If, therefore, one might venture to name one standard, (though liable to many exceptions and occasional alterations,) I am inclined to think, This would come near to the mark: healthy men, in general, need a little above six hours sleep: healthy women, a little above seven in four and twenty. I myself want six hours and a half, and I cannot well subsist with less.

5. If any one desire to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago: I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded, that this arose from my lying longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven, (nearly an hour earlier than I rose the day before,) yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six; but notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five: but nevertheless I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four, (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since.) And I lay awake no more. And I do not now lie awake (taking the year round) a quarter of an hour together in a month. By the same experiment, rising earlier and earlier every morning, may any one find, how much sleep he really wants.

II. 1. "But why should any one be at so much pains? What need is there of being so scrupulous? Why should we make ourselves so particular? What harm is there in doing as our neighbours do? Suppose in lying from ten till six or seven in summer, and till eight or nine in winter."

2. If you would consider this question fairly, you will

need a good deal of candor and impartiality; as what I am about to say will probably be quite new: different from any thing you ever heard in your life; different from the judgment, at least, from the example of your parents, and your nearest relations: nay, and perhaps of the most religious persons you ever were acquainted with. Lift up, therefore, your heart to the Spirit of Truth, and beg of him to shine upon it, that without respecting any man's person, you may see and follow the Truth as it is in Jesus.

3. Do you really desire to know, what harm there is, in not redeeming all the time you can from sleep? Suppose in spending therein an hour a day more than nature requires? Why, first, *it hurts your substance*, it is throwing away six hours a week, which might turn to some temporal account. If you can do any work, you might earn something in that time, were it ever so small. And you have no need to throw even this away. If you do not want it yourself, give it to them that do: you know some of them that are not far off. If you are of no trade, still you may so employ the time, that it will bring money, or money's worth, to yourself, or others.

4. The not redeeming all the time you can from sleep, the spending more time therein, than your constitution necessarily requires, in the second place, *hurts your health*. Nothing can be more certain than this, though it is not commonly observed, because the evil steals on you by slow and insensible degrees. In this gradual, and almost imperceptible manner, it lays the foundation of many diseases. It is the chief, real, (though unsuspected,) cause of all Nervous Diseases in particular. Many enquiries have been made, Why Nervous Disorders are so much more common among us than among our ancestors? Other causes may frequently concur: but the chief is, we lie longer in bed. Instead of rising at four, most of us, who are not obliged to work for our bread, lie till seven, eight, or nine. We need enquire no farther. This sufficiently accounts for the large increase of these painful disorders.

5. It may be observed, that most of these arise, not

barely from sleeping too long, but even from what we imagine to be quite harmless, the lying too long in bed. By *soaking*, (as it is emphatically called,) so long between warm sheets, the flesh is, as it were, parboiled, and becomes soft and flabby. The nerves, in the mean time are quite unstrung, and all the train of melancholy symptoms, faintness, tremors, lowness of spirits, (so called) come on, till life itself is a burden.

6. One common effect of either sleeping too long, or lying too long in bed, is Weakness of Sight, particularly that Weakness which is of the nervous kind. When I was young, my sight was remarkably weak. Why is it stronger now than it was forty years ago? I impute this principally to the blessing of God, who fits us for whatever he calls us to. But undoubtedly the outward mean which he has been pleased to bless, was the rising early in the morning.

7. A still greater objection to the not rising early, the not redeeming all the time we can from sleep, is, *It hurts the soul* as well as the body: it is a sin against God. And this indeed it must necessarily be, on both the preceding accounts. For we cannot waste, or (which comes to the same thing) not improve any part of our worldly substance, neither can we impair our own health, without sinning against him.

8. But this fashionable intemperance does also hurt the soul in a more direct manner. It sows the seeds of foolish and hurtful desires: it dangerously inflames our natural appetites; which a person stretching and yawning in bed, is just prepared to gratify. It breeds and continually increases sloth, so often objected to the English nation. It opens the way, and prepares the soul for every other kind of intemperance. It breeds an universal softness and faintness of spirit, making us afraid of every little inconvenience, unwilling to deny ourselves any pleasure, or to take up or bear any cross. And how then shall we be able (without which we must drop into hell) to "take the kingdom of heaven by violence?" It totally unfits us for "enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ;" and conse-

quently for "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold on eternal life."

9. In how beautiful a manner does that great man, Mr. Law, treat this important subject! * Part of his words I cannot but here subjoin, for the use of every sensible reader.

"I take it for granted, that every Christian who is in health is up early in the morning, For it is much more reasonable to suppose, a person is up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a labourer, or a tradesman, or a servant.

"We conceive an abhorrence of a man that is in bed, when he should be at his labour. We cannot think good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, to neglect his business for it.

"Let this, therefore, teach us to conceive, how odious we must appear to God, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

"Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even among mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy. He, therefore, that chooses to enlarge the slothful indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions; chooses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the noblest enjoyments of the soul. He chooses that state which is a reproach to animals, before that exercise which is the glory of angels.

10. "Besides, he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting or any other act of self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties: but he is no more disposed for the spirit of prayer, than he is disposed for fasting. For sleep thus indulged gives a softness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing but what suits an idle state of mind, as sleep does. So that a person

* Viz. Redeeming Time from Sleep.

who is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up. Every thing that is idle or sensual pleases him. And every thing that requires trouble or self-denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise.

11. " It is not possible for an epicure to be truly devout. He must renounce his sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion. Now he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, as an epicure does. It does not disorder his health, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but like any more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into dulness and sensuality.

" Self-denial of all kinds is the very life and soul of piety. But he that has not so much of it as to be able to be early at his prayers, cannot think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

" What conquest has he got over himself? What right hand has he cut off? What trials is he prepared for? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself as to rise to prayer at such a time, as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour?

12. " Some people will not scruple to tell you that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have nothing to do: and that if they had any business to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But they must be told, that they mistake the matter: that they have a great deal of business to do: they have a hardened heart to change; they have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely he that thinks he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may justly be said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

" You must not, therefore, consider how small a fault it is to rise late; but how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion: and to live in such softness and idleness as make you incapable of the fundamental duties of Christianity.

"If I were to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, I would not insist upon the sin of wasting your money, though it is a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion.

"For the same reason, I do not insist much upon the sin of wasting your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his Apostles, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs that have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

13. "Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice. We must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

"It is contrary to piety: not as accidental slips or mistakes in life are contrary to it: but in such a manner as an ill state of body is contrary to health.

"On the other hand, if you were to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a mean of redeeming your time and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would soon find the advantage. This method, though it seems but a small circumstance, might be a mean of great piety. It would constantly keep it in your mind, that softness and idleness are the bane of religion. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul. And what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an increase from God."

III. 1. It now only remains to enquire, in the third place, How we may redeem the time? How we may proceed in this important affair? In what manner shall we most effectually practise this important branch of temperance?

I advise all of you, who are thoroughly convinced of the unspeakable importance of it, suffer not that conviction to die away, but instantly begin to act suitably to it. Only do not depend on your own strength: if you do, you will be utterly baffled. Be deeply sensible, that as you are not able to do any thing good of yourselves, so here in particular, all your strength, all your resolution will avail nothing. Whoever trusts in himself will be confounded. I never found an exception. I never knew one who trusted in his own strength that could keep this resolution for a twelve-month.

2. I advise you, secondly, Cry to the Strong for strength. Call upon him that hath all power in heaven and earth. And believe that he will answer the prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips. As you cannot have too little confidence in yourself, so you cannot have too much in him. Then set out in faith: and surely his strength shall be made perfect in your weakness.

3. I advise you, thirdly, Add to your faith, prudence: use the most rational means to attain your purpose. Particularly begin at the right end, otherwise you will lose your labour. If you desire to rise early, sleep early: secure this point at all events. In spite of the most dear and agreeable companions, in spite of their most earnest solicitations, in spite of entreaties, railleries, or reproaches, rigorously keep your hour. Rise up precisely at your time, and retire without ceremony. Keep your hour, notwithstanding the most pressing business: lay all things by till the morning. Be it ever so great a cross, ever so great self-denial, keep your hour, or all is over.

4. I advise you, fourthly, Be steady. Keep your hour of rising, without intermission. Do not rise two mornings, and lie in bed the third; but what you do once, do always. "But my head aches." Do not regard that. It will soon be over. "But I am uncommonly drowsy; my eyes are quite heavy." Then you must not parley; otherwise it is a lost case: but start up at once. And if your drowsiness does not go off, lie down for awhile, an hour or two after.

But let nothing make a breach upon this rule, rise and dress yourself at your hour.

5. Perhaps you will say, "The advice is good; but it comes too late: I have made a breach already. I did rise constantly for a season, nothing hindered me. But I gave way by little and little, and I have now left it off for a considerable time!" Then, in the Name of God, begin again! Begin to-morrow; or rather to-night, by going to bed early, in spite of either company or business. Begin with more self-diffidence than before, but with more confidence in God. Only follow these few rules, and my soul for yours, God will give you the victory. In a little time the difficulty will be over: but the benefit will last for ever.

6. If you say, "But I cannot do now as I did then; for I am not what I was. I have many disorders, my spirits are low, my hands shake: I am all relaxed." I answer, All these are nervous symptoms; and they all partly arise from your taking too much sleep; nor is it probable they will ever be removed, unless you remove the cause. Therefore, on this very account, (not only to punish yourself for your folly and unfaithfulness, but) in order to recover your health and strength, resume your early rising. You have no other way: you have nothing else to do. You have no other possible means of recovering, in any tolerable degree, your health both of body and mind. Do not murder yourself outright. Do not run on in the path that leads to the gates of death! As I said before, so I say again, In the Name of God, this very day, set out anew. True, it will be more difficult than it was at the beginning. But bear the difficulty which you have brought upon yourself, and it will not last long. The Sun of Righteousness will soon arise again, and will heal both your soul and your body.

7. But do not imagine that this single point, rising early, will suffice to make you a Christian. No: although that single point, the not rising, may keep you a Heathen, void of the whole Christian spirit; although this alone, (espe-

I advise all of you, who are thoroughly convinced of the unspeakable importance of it, suffer not that conviction to die away, but instantly begin to act suitably to it. Only do not depend on your own strength: if you do, you will be utterly baffled. Be deeply sensible, that as you are not able to do any thing good of yourselves, so here in particular, all your strength, all your resolution will avail nothing. Whoever trusts in himself will be confounded. I never found an exception. I never knew one who trusted in his own strength that could keep this resolution for a twelve-month.

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SERMON XCIX.

ON FAMILY RELIGION.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15.

"As for me and my House, we will serve the LORD."

1. IN the foregoing verses we read, That Joshua, now grown old, "gathered the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges and officers, and they presented themselves before the Lord," ver. 1. And Joshua rehearsed to them the great things which God had done for their fathers, ver. 2—13, concluding with that strong exhortation, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side the flood (Jordan) and in Egypt," ver. 14. Can any thing be more astonishing than this! That even in Egypt, yea, and in the wilderness, where they were daily fed, and both day and night guided by miracle, the Israelites, in general, should worship idols, in flat defiance of the Lord their God! He proceeds: "If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2. A resolution this worthy of a hoary-headed saint, who had had large experience, from his youth up, of the goodness of the Master to whom he had devoted himself, and the advantages of his service. How much is it to be wished that all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, all whom he has brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the bondage of sin: those especially who are united together in Christian Fellowship, would adopt this wise Resolution! Then would the work of the Lord prosper in our land; then would his Word run and be glorified. Then would multitudes of sinners in every place stretch out their hands unto God, until "the glory of the Lord covered the land, as the waters cover the sea."

3. On the contrary, what will the consequence be, if they do not adopt this resolution?—If family religion be neglected?—If care be not taken of the rising generation? Will not the present revival of religion, in a short time die away? Will it not be, as the Historian speaks of the Roman State in its infancy, *Res unius ætatis?* An event that has its beginning and end, within the space of one generation? Will it not be a confirmation of that melancholy remark of Luther, That "a revival of religion never lasts longer than one generation?" By a generation, (as he explains himself,) he means thirty years. But blessed be God this remark does not hold, with regard to the present instance: seeing this revival from its rise in the year 1729, has already lasted above fifty years.

4. Have we not already seen some of the unhappy consequences of good men's not adopting this resolution? Is there not a generation arisen, even within this period, yea, and from pious parents, that know not the Lord? That have neither his love in their hearts, nor his fear before their eyes? How many of them already "despise their fathers, and mock the counsel of their mothers!" How many are utter strangers to real religion, to the life and power of it! And not a few have shaken off all religion, and abandoned themselves to all manner of wickedness! Now although this may sometimes be the case, even of

children educated in a pious manner, yet this case is very rare: I have met with some, but not many instances of it: the wickedness of the children is generally owing to the fault or neglect of their parents. For it is a general, though not universal rule, admitting of some exceptions, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

5. But what is the purport of this resolution, "I and my house will serve the Lord?" In order to understand and practise this, le tus, First, enquire What it is to *serve the* LORD? Secondly, Who are included in that expression, *my House?* And, Thirdly, What can we do, that *we and our House* may *serve the* LORD?

I. 1. We may enquire, first, What it is to *serve the Lord*, not as a Jew, but as a Christian? Not only with an outward service, (though some of the Jews undoubtedly went farther than this,) but with inward; with the service of the heart, "worshipping him in spirit and in truth." The first thing implied in this service is faith; believing in the Name of the Son of God. We cannot perform an acceptable service to God, till we believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Here the spiritual worship of God begins. As soon as any one has the witness in himself, as soon as he can say, "the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," he is able truly "to serve the Lord."

2. As soon as he believes, he loves God, which is another thing implied in "serving the Lord." "We love him, because he first loved us," of which faith is the evidence. The love of a pardoning God is "shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Indeed this love may admit of a thousand degrees: but still every one, as long as he believes, may truly declare before God, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Thou knowest that "my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy Name."

3. And if any man truly love God, he cannot but love his brother also. Gratitude to our Creator will surely

produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures. If we love him, we cannot but love one another, as Christ loved us. We feel our souls enlarged in love toward every child of man. And toward all the children of God we put on "bowels of kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forgiving one another," if we have a complaint against any, "even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us."

4. One thing more is implied in "serving the Lord," namely, the obeying him; the steadily walking in all his ways, the doing his will from the heart. Like those "his servants" above, "who, do his pleasure, who keep his commandments, and hearken to the voice of his words;" these his servants below hearken unto his voice, diligently keep his commandments, carefully avoid whatever he has forbidden, and zealously do whatever he has enjoined: studying always to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

II. "I and my house will serve the Lord," will every real Christian say. But who are included in that expression, *My House?* This is the next point to be considered.

1. The person in your house that claims your first and nearest attention, is, undoubtedly, your wife: seeing you are to love her, even as Christ hath loved the Church, when he laid down his life for it, that he might "purify it unto himself, and render it a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The same end is every husband to pursue, in all his intercourse with his wife: to use every possible mean, that she may be freed from every spot, and may walk unblamable in love.

2. Next to your wife are your children; immortal spirits whom God hath, for a time, entrusted to your care, that you may train them up in all holiness, and fit them for the enjoyment of God in eternity. This is a glorious and important trust; seeing one soul is of more value than all the world beside. Every child, therefore, you are to watch over with the utmost care, that when you are called to give an account of each to the Father of Spirits, you may give your account with joy and not with grief.

3. Your servants of whatever kind, you are to look upon as a kind of *secondary children:* these, likewise, God has committed to your charge, as one that must give account: for every one under your roof that has a soul to be saved, is under your care: not only indented servants, who are legally engaged to remain with you for a term of years; not only hired servants, whether they voluntarily contract for a longer or shorter time: but also those who serve you by the week or day: for these too are, in a measure, delivered into your hands. And it is not the will of *your* Master who is in heaven, that any of these should go out of your hands, before they have received from you something more valuable than gold or silver. Yea, and you are in a degree accountable, even for "the stranger that is within your gates." As you are particularly required, to see that he does "no manner of work" on the Lord's day, while he is within your gates; so, by parity of reason, you are required, to do all that is in your power, to prevent his sinning against God in any other instance.

III. Let us enquire, in the third place, What can we do, that all these may "serve the Lord?"

1. May we not endeavour, first, To *restrain* them from all outward sin? From profane swearing, from taking the Name of God in vain; from doing any needless work, or taking any pastime on the Lord's-day? This labour of love you owe even to your visitants: much more to your wife, children, and servants. The former, over whom you have the least influence, you may restrain by argument or mild persuasion. If you find that, after repeated trials, they will not yield either to one or the other, it is your bounden duty, to set ceremony aside, and to dismisss them from your house. Servants also, whether by the day, or for a longer space, if you cannot reclaim, either by reasoning, added to your example, or by gentle or severe reproofs, though frequently repeated, you must, in anywise, dismiss from your family, though it should be ever so inconvenient.

2. But you cannot dismiss your wife, unless for the cause of fornication, that is, adultery. What then can be done,

if she is habituated to any other open sin? I cannot find in the Bible, that a husband has authority to strike his wife on any account: even suppose she struck him first; unless his life were in imminent danger. I never have known one instance yet of a wife that was mended thereby. I have heard, indeed, of some such instances; but as I did not see them, I do not believe them. It seems to me, all that can be done in this case, is to be done partly by example, partly by argument or persuasion, each applied in such a manner as is dictated by christian prudence. If evil can ever be overcome, it must be *overcome by good.* It cannot be overcome by evil: we cannot beat the devil with his own weapons. Therefore, if this evil cannot be overcome by good, we are called to suffer it. We are then called to say, This is the cross which God hath chosen for me. He surely permits it for wise ends: "let him do what seemeth him good." Whenever he sees it to be best, he will remove this cup from me. Meantime continue in earnest prayer, knowing that with God no word is impossible: and that he will either in due time take the temptation away, or make it a blessing to your soul.

3. Your children, while they are young, you may restrain from evil, not only by advice, persuasion, and reproof, but also by correction; only remembering, that this mean is to be used last: not till all others have been tried, and found to be ineffectual. And even then you should take the utmost care to avoid the very appearance of passion. Whatever is done should be done with mildness; nay, indeed, with kindness too. Otherwise your own spirit will suffer loss; and the child will reap little advantage.

4. But some will tell you, "All this is lost labour; a child need not to be corrected at all. Instruction, persuasion, and advice will be sufficient for any child without correction: especially if gentle reproof be added, as occasion may require." I answer, there may be particular instances, wherein this method may be successful. But you must not, in anywise, lay this down as an universal rule: unless you suppose yourself wiser than Solomon, or, to speak more

properly, wiser than God. For it is God himself, who best knoweth his own creatures, that has told us expressly, "He that spareth the rod hateth the child; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24. And upon this is grounded that plain commandment, directed to all that fear God, "Chasten thy son while there is hope; and let not thy soul spare for his crying," chap. xix. 18.

5. May we not endeavour, secondly, to *instruct* them? To take care that every person who is under our roof, have all such knowledge as is necessary to salvation? To see that our wife, servants, and children, be taught all those things which belong to their eternal peace? In order to this, you should provide that not only your wife, but your servants also may enjoy all the public means of instruction. On the Lord's-day in particular, you should so fore-cast what is necessary to be done at home, that they may have an opportunity of attending all the ordinances of God. Yea, and you should take care that they have some time every day for reading, meditation, and prayer. And you should enquire, whether they do actually employ that time, in the exercises for which it is allowed. Neither should any day pass without family prayer, seriously and solemnly performed.

6. You should particularly endeavour to instruct your children, early, plainly, frequently, and patiently. Instruct them *early* from the first hour that you perceive reason begins to dawn. Truth may then begin to shine upon the mind far earlier than we are apt to suppose. And whoever watches the first opening of the understanding, may, by little and little, supply fit matter for it to work upon, and may turn the eye of the soul toward good things, as well as toward bad or trifling ones. Whenever a child begins to speak, you may be assured reason begins to work. I know no cause why a parent should not just then begin to speak of the best things, the things of God. And from that time no opportunity should be lost, of instilling all truths as they are capable of receiving them.

7. But the speaking to them early will not avail, unless you likewise speak to them *plainly*. Use such words as little children may understand, just such as they use themselves. Carefully observe the few ideas which they have already, and endeavour to graft what you say upon them. To take a little example: bid the child look up; and ask, "What do you see there?" "The Sun?" "See, how bright it is! Feel how warm it shines upon your hand! Look, how it makes the grass and the flowers to grow, and the trees and every thing look green! But God, though you cannot see him, is above the sky, and is a deal brighter than the Sun! It is he, it is God that made the Sun, and you and me, and every thing. It is he that makes the grass and the flowers to grow: that makes the trees green, and the fruit to come upon them! Think what he can do! He can do whatever he pleases. He can strike you or me dead in a moment. But he loves you: he loves to do you good. He loves to make you happy. Should not you then love *him!* You love *me*, because I love you and do you good. But it is God that makes me love you. Therefore, you should love him. And he will teach you how to love him."

8. While you are speaking in this, or some such manner, you should be continually lifting up your heart to God, beseeching him to open the eyes of their understanding, and to pour his light upon them. He, and he alone, can make them to differ herein from the beasts that perish. He alone can apply your words to their hearts: without which all your labour will be in vain. But whenever the Holy Ghost teaches, there is no delay in learning.

9. But if you would see the fruit of your labour, you must teach them not only early and plainly, but *frequently* too. It would be of little or no service to do it, only once or twice a week. How often do you feed their bodies? Not less than three times a day. And is the soul of less value than the body? Will you not then feed this as often? If you find this a tiresome task, there is certainly something

wrong in your own mind. You do not love them enough: or you do not love him, who is your Father and their Father. Humble yourself before him! Beg that he would give you more love; and love will make the labour light.

10. But it will not avail to teach them both early, plainly, and frequently, unless you *persevere* therein. Never leave off, never intermit your labour of love, till you see the fruit of it. But in order to this, you will find the absolute need of being endued with power from on high: without which, I am persuaded, none ever had, or will have patience sufficient for the work. Otherwise the inconceivable dulness of some children, and the giddiness or perverseness of others, would induce them to give up the irksome task, and let them follow their own imagination.

11. And suppose after you have done this, after you have taught your children from their early infancy, in the plainest manner you could, omitting no opportunity, and persevering therein, you did not presently see any fruit of your labour, you must not conclude that there will be none. Possibly the "bread which you have cast upon the waters" may be "found after many days." The seed which has long remained in the ground, may, at length, spring up into a plentiful harvest. Especially if you do not restrain prayer before God, if you continue instant herein with all supplication. Mean time whatever the effect of this may be upon others, your reward is with the Most High.

12. Many parents on the other hand, presently see the fruit of the seed they have sown, and have the comfort of observing, that their children grow in grace in the same proportion as they grow in years. Yet they have not done all. They have still upon their hands another task, sometimes of no small difficulty. Their children are now old enough to go to school. But to what school is it adviseable to send them?

13. Let it be remembered, that I do not speak to the wild, giddy, thoughtless world, but to those that fear God. I ask then, For what end do you send your children to

school? "Why, that they may be fit to live in the world." In which world do you mean? This or the next: Perhaps you thought of this world only: and had forgot that there is a world to come: yea, and one that will last for ever! Pray take this into your account, and send them to such masters, as will keep it always before their eyes. Otherwise to send them to school, (permit me to speak plainly,) is little better than sending them to the devil. At all events, then, send your boys, if you have any concern for their souls, not to any of the large, public schools, (for they are nursuries of all manner of wickedness,) but a private school, kept by some pious man, who endeavours to instruct a small number of children in religion and learning together.

14. "But what shall I do with my girls?" By no means send them to a large boarding-school. In these seminaries too the children teach one another pride, vanity, affectation, intrigue, artifice, and in short, every thing which a Christian woman ought not to learn. Suppose a girl were well inclined, yet what would she do in a crowd of children, not one of whom has any thought of God, or the least concern for her soul? Is it likely, is it possible, she should retain any fear of God, or any thought of saving her soul in such company? Especially as their whole conversation points another way, and turns upon things which one would wish she would never think on. I never yet knew a pious, sensible woman that had been bred at a large boarding-school, who did not aver, one might as well send a young maid to be bred in Drury-lane.

15. "But where then shall I send my girls?"—If you cannot breed them up yourself, (as my mother did, who bred up seven daughters, to years of maturity,) send them to some mistress that truly fears God, one whose life is a pattern to her scholars, and who has only so many, that she can watch over each, as one that must give an account to God. Forty years ago I did not know such a mistress in England: but you may now find several: you may find

such a mistress, and such a school at Highgate, at Deptford, near Bristol, in Chester, or near Leeds.

16. We may suppose your sons have now been long enough at school, and you are thinking of some business for them. Before you determine any thing on this head, see that your eye be single. Is it so? Is it your view, to please God herein? It is well, if you take him into your account. But surely if you love or fear God yourself, this will be your first consideration; in what business will your son be most likely to love and serve God? In what employment will he have the greatest advantage, for laying up treasure in heaven? I have been shocked above measure, in observing how little this is attended to, even by pious parents! Even these consider only how he may get most money: not how he may get most holiness! Even these, upon this glorious motive, send him to a Heathen master, and into a family, where there is not the very form, much less the power of religion! Upon this motive, they fix him in a business, which will necessarily expose him to such temptations, as will leave him not a probability, if a possibility, of serving God. O savage parents! Unnatural, diabolical cruelty!—If you believe there is another world.

"But what shall I do?" Set God before your eyes, and do all things with a view to please him. Then you will find a master, of whatever profession, that loves, or, at least, fears God; and you will find a family, wherein is the form of religion, if not the power also. Your son may, nevertheless, serve the devil if he will: but it is probable, he will not. And do not regard, if he get less money, provided he get more holiness. It is enough, though he have less of earthly goods, if he secure the possession of heaven.

17. There is one circumstance more wherein you will have great need of the wisdom from above. Your son or your daughter is now of age to marry, and desires your advice relative to it. Now you know what the world calls

a *good match*, one whereby much money is gained. Undoubtedly it is so, if it be true, that money always brings happiness. But I doubt it is not true: money seldom brings happiness, either in this world or the world to come. Then let no man deceive you with vain words: riches and happiness seldom dwell together. Therefore, if you are wise, you will not seek riches for your children, by their marriage. See that your eye be single in this also: aim simply at the glory of God, and the real happiness of your children, both in time and eternity. It is a melancholy thing, to see how christian parents rejoice, in selling their son or their daughter to a wealthy heathen! And do you seriously call this *A good match!* Thou fool, by parity of reason, thou mayest call hell *a good lodging*, and the devil *a good master*. O learn a better lesson from a better Master. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," both for *thyself and thy children*, "and all other things shall be added unto you."

18. It is undoubtedly true, that if you are steadily determined to walk in this path; to endeavour by every possible mean, that you and your house may thus serve the Lord; that every member of your family may worship him, not only in form, but in spirit and in truth: you will have need to use all the grace, all the courage, all the wisdom which God has given you. For you will find such hinderances in the way, as only the mighty power of God can enable you to break through. You will have all the *saints of the world* to grapple with, who will think, you carry things too far. You will have all the powers of darkness against you, employing both force and fraud: and, above all, the deceitfulness of your own heart, which, if you will hearken to it, will supply you with many reasons why you should be a *little more* conformable to the world. But as you have begun, go on in the Name of the Lord, and in the power of his might! Set the smiling, and the frowning world, with the prince thereof, at defiance. Follow reason and the Oracles of God; not the fashions and

customs of men. "Keep thyself pure." Whatever others do, let you and your house "adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour." Let you, your yoke-fellow, your children, and your servants be all on the Lord's side; sweetly drawing together in one yoke, walking in all his commandments and ordinances, till every one of you "*shall* receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour."

SERMON C.

ON THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

"Train up a Child in the Way wherein he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

1. WE must not imagine, that these words are to be understood in an absolute sense, as if no child that had been trained up in the way wherein he should go, had ever departed from it. Matter of fact will by no means agree with this. So far from it, that it has been a common observation, Some of the best parents have the worst children. It is true, this might sometimes be the case, because good men have not always a good understanding. And without this it is hardly to be expected, that they will know how to train up their children. Besides those who are, in other respects, good men, have often too much easiness of temper; so that they go no farther in restraining their children from evil, than old Eli did, when he said gently, "Nay, my sons, the report I hear of you is not good." This then is no contradiction to the assertion; for their children are not "trained up in the way wherein they should go." But it must be acknowledged, some have been trained therein with all possible care and diligence: and yet before they were old, yea, in the strength of their years, they did utterly depart from it.

2. The words then must be understood with some limitation, and then they contain an unquestionable truth. It is a general, though not an universal promise, and many have found the happy accomplishment of it. As this is the most probable method of making their children pious, which any parents can take, so it generally, although not always, meets with the desired success. The God of their fathers is with their children: he blesses their endeavours: and they have the satisfaction of leaving their religion, as well as their worldly substance, to those that descend from them.

3. But what is *the Way wherein* a child *should go?* And how shall we *train him up* therein? The ground of this is admirably well laid down by Mr. Law, in his *Serious Call to a devout Life.* Part of his words are.—

"Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instructer for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors.

"And as the only end of a physician is, to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is, to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education, therefore, is to be considered, as reason borrowed at second-hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man his rational perfection.

"This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties: upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God; the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature; upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth, and the folly of indulging our passions.

"Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light: so one would expect the education of children should be as much mended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are.

"As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man and the end of his creation: as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the mean of purifying our souls, of pleasing God, and being happy eternally: one might naturally suppose that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training, and practising children in such a course of life, as the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

"An education under Pythagoras or Socrates had no other end but to teach children, to think, and act as Pythagoras and Socrates did.

"And is it not reasonable to suppose that a Christian Education should have no other end but to teach them how to think, and judge, and act according to the strictest rules of Christianity?

"At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching them to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such abstinence, humility, sobriety, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but a hundred times more regarded than any or all things else.

"For those that educate us should imitate our guardian angels, suggest nothing to our minds, but what is wise and holy; help us to discover every false judgment of our minds, and to subdue every wrong passion in our hearts.

"And it is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit from a christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove all our diseases."

4. Let it be carefully remembered all this time, That

God, not man, is the Physician of Souls: that it is he and none else, who *giveth medicine to heal* our natural *sickness*: that all "the help which is done upon earth, he doth it himself:" that none of all the children of men is able to "bring a clean thing out of an unclean:" and in a word, that "it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." But it is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures: to help man by man. He honours men, to be in this sense, "workers together with him." By this mean the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him.

5. This being premised, in order to see distinctly, What is the way wherein we should train up a child, let us consider, What are the Diseases of his Nature? What are those spiritual Diseases, which every one that is born of a woman, brings with him into the world?

Is not the first of these *Atheism?* After all that has been so plausibly written concerning "the innate Idea of God:" after all that has been said, of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations: it does not appear, that man has naturally any more idea of God, than any of the beasts of the field: he has no knowledge of God at all: neither is God in all his thoughts. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought, (whether by the grace of God, or by his own reflection, or by education,) he is, by nature, a mere Atheist.

6. Indeed it may be said, that every man is by nature, as it were, his own god. He worships himself. He is, in his own conception, absolute Lord of himself. Dryden's Hero speaks only according to nature, when he says, "Myself am King of *me*." He seeks himself in all things. He pleases himself. And why not? Who is Lord over him? *His own Will* is his only law: he does this or that because it is his good pleasure. In the same spirit as the son of the morning said in old time, "I will sit upon the sides of the North," he says, "*I will* do thus or thus." And do we not find sensible men on every side, who are of the self-same spirit? who, if asked, "Why did you do this?" will readily answer, "Because I had a mind to it."

7. Another evil disease which every human soul brings into the world with him, is *pride;* a continual proneness to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Every man can discern more or less of this disease, in every one,—but himself. And, indeed, if he could discern it in himself, it would subsist no longer; for he would then, in consequence, think of himself, just as he ought to think.

8. The next disease, natural to every human soul, born with every man, is *love of the world.* Every man is, by nature, a lover of the creature, instead of the Creator: a "lover of pleasure," in every kind, "more than a lover of God." He is a slave to foolish and hurtful desires, in one kind or another; either to the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, or the pride of life." "The desire of the flesh," is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies one or more of the outward senses. "The desire of the eyes" is a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the internal sense, the imagination, either by things grand, or new, or beautiful. "The pride of life" seems to mean a propensity to seek happiness in what gratifies the sense of honour. To this head is usually referred, *the love of money,* one of the basest passions that can have place in the human heart. But it may be doubted, whether this be not an acquired, rather than a natural distemper.

9. Whether this be a natural disease or not, it is certain, *anger* is. The ancient Philosopher defines it, "A sense of injury received, with a desire of revenge." Now, were there ever any one born of a woman, who did not labour under this? Indeed, like other diseases of the mind, it is far more violent in some than in others. But it is *furor brevis,* as the Poet speaks: it is a real, though short madness, wherever it is.

10. A deviation from *truth* is equally natural to all the children of men. One said in his haste, "All men are liars:" but we may say, upon cool reflection, All natural men will, upon a close temptation, vary from, or disguise the truth. If they do not offend against *veracity,* if they do not say what is false, yet they frequently offend against

simplicity. They use art: they hang out false colours: they practise either simulation or dissimulation. So that you cannot say truly of any person living, till grace has altered nature, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

11. Every one is likewise prone by nature, to speak or act contrary to *justice*. This is another of the diseases which we bring with us into the world. All human creatures are naturally partial to themselves, and when opportunity offers, have more regard to their own interest or pleasure, than strict justice allows. Neither is any man by nature *merciful*, as our heavenly Father is merciful: but all, more or less, transgress that glorious rule of mercy as well as justice, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, the same do unto them."

12. Now if these are the general diseases of human nature, is it not the grand end of education to cure them? And is it not the part of all those to whom God has entrusted the education of children, to take all possible care, first, not to increase, not to feed any of these diseases, (as the generality of parents constantly do) and next to use every possible mean of healing them?

13. To come to particulars. What can parents do, and mothers more especially, to whose care our children are necessarily committed, in their tender years, with regard to the *Atheism* that is natural to all the children of men? How is this fed by the generality of parents, even those that love, or, at least, fear God, while in spending hours, perhaps days with their children, they hardly name the Name of God? Mean time, they talk of a thousand other things in the world that are round about them. Will not then the things of the present world, which surround these children on every side, naturally take up their thoughts, and set God at a greater distance from them, (if that be possible,) than he was before? Do not parents feed the Atheism of their children farther, by ascribing the works of creation to *nature*? Does not the common way of talking about nature leave God quite out of the question? Do

they not feed this disease, whenever they talk in the hearing of their children, of any thing *happening* so or so? Of things coming by *chance?* Of good or ill *fortune?* As also when they ascribe this or that event, to the wisdom or power of men: or, indeed, to any other second causes, as if these governed the world? Yea, do they not feed it unawares, while they are talking of their own wisdom, or goodness, or power to do this or that, without expressly mentioning, that all these are the gifts of God? All tends to confirm the Atheism of their children, and to keep God out of their thoughts.

14. But we are by no means clear of their blood, if we only go thus far, if we barely do not feed their disease. What can be done to cure it? From the first dawn of reason continually inculcate, God is in this and every place. God made you, and me, and the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and every thing. And every thing is his: heaven, and earth, and all that is therein. God orders all things: He makes the sun shine, and the wind blow, and the trees bear fruit. Nothing comes by chance: that is a silly word: there is no such thing as chance. As God made the world, so he governs the world, and every thing that is in it. Not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground, without the Will of God. And as he governs all things, so he governs all men, good and bad, little and great. He gives them all the power and wisdom they have. And he over-rules all. He gives us all the goodness we have: every good thought, and word, and work, are from him. Without him we can neither think any thing right, or do any thing right. Thus it is, we are to inculcate upon them, That *God is all in all.*

15. Thus may we counteract, and, by the grace of God assisting us, gradually cure the natural Atheism of our children. But what can we do to cure their *Self-will?* It is equally rooted in their nature, and is, indeed, the original idolatry, which is not confined to one age or country, but is common to all the nations under heaven. And how few parents are to be found even among Christians, even among them that truly fear God, who are not guilty in this matter?

Who do not continually feed and increase this grievous distemper in their children? To let them have their own will, does this most effectually. To let them take their own way, is the sure method of increasing their self-will sevenfold. But who has the resolution to do otherwise? One parent in a hundred? Who can be so singular, so cruel, as not, more or less, to *humour* her child? "And why should you not? What harm can there be in this, which every body does?" The harm is, that it strengthens their will more and more, till it will neither bow to God nor man. To humour children is, as far as in us lies, to make their disease incurable. A wise parent, on the other hand, should begin to break their will, the first moment it appears. In the whole art of Christian education there is nothing more important than this. The will of a parent is to a little child in the place of the will of God. Therefore, studiously teach them to submit to this while they are children, that they may be ready to submit to his will, when they are men. But in order to carry this point, you will need incredible firmness and resolution. For after you have once begun, you must never more give way. You must hold on still in an even course: you must never intermit your attention for one hour; otherwise you will lose your labour.

16. If you are not willing to lose all the labour you have been at, to break the will of your child, to bring his will into subjection to yours, that it may be afterward subject to the will of God, there is one advice, which, though little known, should be particularly attended to. It may seem a small circumstance; but it is of more consequence than one can easily imagine. It is this; never, on any account, give a child any thing that it cries for. For it is a true observation, (and you may make the experiment as often as you please,) If you give a child what he cries for, you *pay him for crying:* and then he will certainly cry again. "But if I do not give it him when he cries, he will scream all day long." If he does, it is your own fault; for it is in your power effectually to prevent it. For no mother need suffer a child to cry aloud after it is a year old. "Why, it

is impossible to hinder it." So many suppose; but it is an entire mistake. I am a witness of the direct contrary; and so are many others. My own mother had ten children, each of whom had spirit enough. Yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud, after it was a year old. A gentlewoman of Sheffield, (several of whose children I suppose are alive still,) assured me, she had the same success with regard to her eight children. When some were objecting to the possibility of this, Mr. Parson Greenwood, (well known in the North of England,) replied, "This cannot be impossible; I have had the proof of it in my own family. Nay, of more than this. I had six children by my former wife. And she suffered none of them to cry aloud, after they were ten months old. And yet none of their spirits were so broken, as to unfit them for any of the offices of life." This, therefore, may be done by any woman of sense, who may thereby save herself abundance of trouble, and prevent that disagreeable noise, the squawling of young children, from being heard under her roof. But I allow, none but a woman of sense will be able to effect this. Yea, and a woman of such patience and resolution, as only the grace of God can give. However, this is doubtless the more excellent way: and she that is able to receive it, let her receive it!

17. It is hard to say, whether self-will or *pride* be the more fatal distemper. It was chiefly pride that threw down so many of the stars of heaven, and turned angels into devils. But what can parents do, in order to check this until it can be radically cured?

First: Beware of adding fuel to the flame, of feeding the disease, which you should cure. Almost all parents are guilty of doing this, by praising their children to their face. If you are sensible of the folly and cruelty of this, see that you sacredly abstain from it. And in spite of either fear or complaisance, go one step farther. Not only do not encourage, but do not suffer others to do what you dare not do yourself. How few parents are sufficiently aware of this! Or, at least, sufficiently resolute to practise it. To check every one at the first word, that would praise

them before their face. Even those who would not, on any account, *sit attentive to their own applause*, nevertheless, do not scruple to sit attentive to the applause of their children. Yea, and that to their face! O consider! Is not this the spreading a net for their feet? Is it not a grievous incentive to pride, even if they are praised for what is truly praise-worthy? Is it not doubly hurtful, if they are praised for things not truly praise-worthy;—things of an indifferent nature, as sense, good breeding, beauty, elegance of apparel? This is liable not only to hurt the heart, but their understanding also. It has a manifest and direct tendency, to infuse pride and folly together: to pervert both their taste and judgment, teaching them to value what is dung and dross in the sight of God.

18. If, on the contrary, you desire, without loss of time, to strike at the root of their pride, teach your children, as soon as possibly you can, that they are fallen spirits; that they are fallen short of that glorious image of God, wherein they were first created; that they are not now, as they were once, incorruptible pictures of the God of glory; bearing the express likeness of the wise, the good, the holy Father of spirits; but more ignorant, more foolish, and more wicked, than they can possibly conceive. Shew them that, in pride, passion, and revenge, they are now like the devil. And that in foolish desires and grovelling appetites, they are like the beasts of the field. Watch over them diligently in this respect, that whenever occasion offers, you may "pride in its earliest motions find," and check the very first appearance of it.

If you ask, "But how shall I encourage them when they do well, if I am never to commend them?" I answer, I did not affirm this: I did not say, "You are *never* to commend them." I know, many writers assert this, and writers of eminent piety. They say, "To commend man, is to rob God," and therefore condemn it altogether. But what say the Scriptures? I read there, that our Lord himself frequently commended his own disciples: and the great Apostle scruples not to commend the Corinthians, Philip-

pians, and divers others to whom he writes. We may not, therefore, condemn this altogether. But I say, use it exceeding sparingly. And when you use it, let it be with the utmost caution, directing them at the same moment, to look upon all they have as the free gift of God, and with the deepest self-abasement to say, "Not unto us! Not unto us! but unto thy Name give the praise!"

19. Next to self-will and pride, the most fatal disease with which we are born, is *love of the world.* But how studiously do the generality of parents cherish this in its several branches? They cherish "the desire of the flesh," that is, the tendency to seek happiness in pleasing the outward senses, by studying to *enlarge the pleasure of tasting* in their children to the uttermost: not only giving them before they are weaned other things beside milk, the natural food of children, but giving them both before and after, any sort of meat or drink that they will take. Yea, they entice them long before nature requires it, to take wine or strong drink; and provide them with comfits, gingerbread, raisins, and whatever fruit they have a mind to. They feed in them "the desire of the eyes," the propensity to seek happiness in pleasing the imagination, by giving them pretty playthings, glittering toys, shining buckles, or buttons, fine clothes, red shoes, laced hats, needless ornaments, as ribbons, necklaces, ruffles: yea, and by proposing any of these as *rewards* for doing their duty, which is stamping a great value upon them. With equal care and attention they cherish in them the third branch of the love of the world, *the pride of life,* the propensity to seek their happiness in the "honour that cometh of men." Nor is the love of money forgotten: many an exhortation do they hear, on *securing the main chance;* many a lecture exactly agreeing with that of the old Heathen, "*Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem.* "Get money, honestly if you can; but if not; get money." And they are carefully taught to look on riches and honour as the reward of all their labours.

20. In direct opposition to all this, a wise and truly kind

parent will take the utmost care, not to cherish in her children the desire of the flesh, their natural propensity to seek happiness in gratifying the outward senses. With this view she will suffer them to taste no food but milk, till they are weaned; which a thousand experiments shew is most safely and easily done at the seventh month. And then accustom them to the most simple food, chiefly of vegetables. She may inure them to taste only one kind of food, beside bread, at dinner, and constantly to breakfast and sup on milk, either cold, or heated; but not boiled. She may use them to sit by her at meals; and ask for nothing, but take what is given them. She need never, till they are, at least, nine or ten years old, let them know the taste of tea, or use any other drink at meals, but water, or small beer. And they will never desire to taste either meat or drink between meals, if not accustomed thereto. If fruit, comfits, or any thing of the kind be given them, let them not touch it but at meals. And never propose any of these as a reward; but teach them to look higher than this.

But herein a difficulty will arise, which it will need much resolution to conquer. Your servants who will not understand your plan, will be continually giving little things to your children, and thereby undoing all your work. This you must prevent, if possible, by warning them when they first come into your house, and repeating the warning from time to time. If they *will* do it notwithstanding, you must turn them away. Better lose a good servant than spoil a good child.

Possibly you may have another difficulty to encounter, and one of a still more trying nature. Your mother, or your husband's mother, may live with you; and you will do well to shew her all possible respect. But let her on no account have the least share in the management of your children. She would undo all that you had done; she would give them their own will in all things. She would humour them to the destruction of their souls, if not their bodies too. In four-score years I have not met with one woman that knew how to manage grand-children. My

own mother, who governed her children so well, could never govern one grand-child. In every other point obey your mother. Give up your will to her's. But with regard to the management of your children, steadily keep the reins in your own hands.

21. A wise and kind parent will be equally cautious, of feeding "the desire of the eyes" in her children. She will give them no pretty play things, no glittering toys, shining buckles or buttons, fine or gay clothes: no needless ornaments of any kind; nothing that can attract the eye. Nor will she suffer any other person to give them what she will not give them herself. Any thing of the kind that is offered, may be either civilly refused, or received and laid by. If they are displeased at this, you cannot help it. Complaisance, yea, and temporal interest, must needs be set aside, when the eternal interests of your children are at stake.

Your pains will be well requited, if you can inspire them early, with a contempt of all finery; and on the other hand, with a love and esteem, for neat plainness of dress. Teaching them to associate the ideas of plainness and modesty: and those of a fine and a loose woman. Likewise, instill into them as early as possible, a fear and contempt of pomp and grandeur, an abhorrence and dread of the love of money, and a deep conviction, that riches cannot give happiness. Wean them, therefore, from all these false ends: habituate them to make God their end in all things, and inure them in all they do, to aim at knowing, loving, and serving God.

22. Again: The generality of parents feed *anger* in their children, yea, the worst part of it, that is, revenge. The silly mother says, "What hurt my child! Give me a blow for it." What horrid work is this! Will not the old murderer teach them this lesson fast enough? Let the christian parent spare no pains to teach them just the contrary. Remind them of the words of our blessed Lord, "It was said of old, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." Not by returning evil for evil. Rather than this, "if a man take away thy

cloak, let him take away thy coat also." Remind him of the words of the great Apostle, "Dearly beloved, Avenge not yourselves. For it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord."

23. The generality of parents feed and increase the natural *falsehood* of their children. How often may we hear that senseless word! "No, it was not *you;* it was not my child that did it: say, it was the cat." What amazing folly is this! Do you feel no remorse, while you are putting a lie in the mouth of your child, before it can speak plainly? And do not you think, it will make a good proficiency when it comes to years of discretion? Others teach them both dissimulation and lying, by their unreasonable severity: and yet others, by admiring and applauding their ingenious lies and cunning tricks. Let the wise parent on the contrary, teach them to "put away all lying," and both in little things and great, in jest or earnest, speak the very truth from their heart. Teach them that the author of all falsehood is the devil, who "is a liar and the father of it." Teach them to abhor and despise, not only lying, but all equivocating, all cunning and dissimulation. Use every mean to give them a love of truth: of veracity, sincerity, and simplicity, and of openness both of spirit and behaviour.

24. Most parents increase the natural tendency to *injustice* in their children, by conniving at their wronging each other, if not laughing at, or even applauding their witty contrivances to cheat one another. Beware of every thing of this kind: and from their very infancy, sow the seeds of justice in their hearts; and train them up in the exactest practice of it. If possible, teach them the love of justice, and that in the least things as well as the greatest. Impress upon their minds the old proverb, "He that will steal a penny, will steal a pound." Habituate them to render unto all their due, even to the uttermost farthing.

25. Many parents connive, likewise, at the *ill-nature* of their children, and thereby strengthen it. But truly affectionate parents will not indulge them in any kind or degree

of *unmercifulness*. They will not suffer them to vex their brothers or sisters, either by word or deed. They will not allow them to hurt or give pain to any thing that has life. They will not permit them to rob birds-nests, much less to kill any thing without necessity: not even snakes, which are as innocent as worms, or toads, which, notwithstanding their ugliness, and the ill name they lie under, have been proved over and over, to be as harmless as flies. Let them extend in its measure, the rule of doing as they would be done by, to every animal whatsoever. Ye that are truly kind parents; in the morning, in the evening, and all the day beside, press upon all your children, "to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us;" to mind that one point, "God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

SERMON CI.

ON OBEDIENCE TO PARENTS.

COLOSSIANS III. 20.

"*Children, obey your Parents in all Things.*"

1. IT has been a subject of controversy for many years, Whether there be any innate principles in the mind of man? But it is allowed on all hands, if there be any practical principles naturally implanted in the soul, That we *ought to honour our Parents*, will claim this character almost before any other. It is enumerated amongst those universal principles by the most ancient Authors, and is, undoubtedly, found even among most savages, in the most barbarous nations. We may trace it through all the extent of Europe and Asia, through the wilds of Afric, and the forests of America. And it is not less, but more observable in the most civilized nations. So it was, first in the Eastern parts of the world, which were for so many ages, the seat of empire, of learning, and politeness, as well as of religion. So it was afterwards, in all the Grecian States, and throughout the whole Roman Empire. In this respect it is plain, they that *have not the* written *law*, *are a law* unto themselves; showing *the work* (the substance) *of the law*, to he *written in their hearts.*

2. And wherever God has revealed his Will to man, this law has been a part of that Revelation. It has been herein

opened afresh, considerably enlarged, and enforced in the strongest manner. In the Jewish Revelation, the notorious breakers thereof were punishable with death. And this was one of the laws which our blessed Lord did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Accordingly he severely reproved the Scribes and Pharisees, for making it void through their traditions: clearly shewing that the obligation thereof extended to all ages. It is the substance of this which St. Paul delivers to the Ephesians, (chap. vi. 1,) "Children, obey your Parents in the Lord:" and again in these words to the Colossians, "Children, obey your Parents in all things."

3. It is observable, that the Apostle enforces this duty by a threefold encouragement: First, to the Ephesians he adds, "For this is right:" it is an instance of justice as well as mercy. It is no more than their due: it is what we owe to them, for the very being which we have received from them. Secondly, "This is acceptable to the Lord;" it is peculiarly pleasing to the great Father of men and angels, that we should pay honour and obedience to the fathers of our flesh. Thirdly, It is "the First Commandment with Promise;" the first to the performance whereof a peculiar promise is annexed, "that it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This promise has been generally understood, to include health and temporal blessings, as well as long life. And we have seen innumerable proofs that it belongs to the Christian as well as the Jewish Dispensation: many remarkable instances of its accomplishment occur even at this day.

But what is the meaning of these words, "Children, obey your Parents in all things." I will endeavour by the assistance of God, first, to explain, and then to apply them.

I. 1. First, I will endeavour to explain these Words; and the rather, because so few people seem to understand them. Look round into the world, not the heathen, but the Christian world, nay, the reformed part of it. Look

among those that have the Scriptures in their own tongue: and who is there that appears even to have heard of this? Here and there a child obeys the parent out of fear, or perhaps out of natural affection. But how many children can you find that obey their fathers and mothers, out of a sense of duty to God? And how many parents can you find, that duly inculcate this duty upon their children? I doubt, a vast majority both of parents and children are totally ignorant of the whole affair. For the sake of these I will make it as plain as I can: but still I am thoroughly sensible, those that are not willing to be convinced, will no more understand what I say, than if I were talking Greek or Hebrew.

2. You will easily observe, that by *Parents*, the Apostle means both Fathers and Mothers, as he refers us to the Fifth Commandment, which names both the one and the other. And however human laws may vary herein, the law of God makes no difference; but lays us under the same obligation of obeying both the one and the other.

3. But before we consider, How we are to obey our parents, it may be inquired, How long we are to obey them? Are children to obey, only till they run alone? Till they go to school? Till they can read and write? Or till they are as tall as their parents? Or attain to years of discretion? Nay, if they obey only because they fear to be beaten, or because otherwise they cannot procure food and raiment, what avails such obedience? Those only who obey their parents, when they can live without them, and when they neither hope nor fear any thing from them, shall have praise from God.

4. "But is a man that is at age, or a woman that is married, under any farther obligation to obey their parents?" With regard to marriage, although it is true, that a man is to leave father and mother, and to cleave unto his wife: and, by parity of reason, she is to leave father and mother, and cleave unto her husband; (in consequence of which there may be some particular cases wherein conjugal duty must take place of filial;) yet I cannot learn,

either from Scripture or Reason, that marriage either cancels or lessens the general obligation of filial duty. Much less does it appear, that it is either cancelled or lessened by our having lived one and twenty years. I never understood it so, in my own case. When I had lived upwards of thirty years, I looked upon myself to stand just in the same relation to my father as I did when I was ten years old. And when I was between forty and fifty, I judged myself fully as much obliged to obey my mother in every thing lawful, as I did when I was in my leading-strings.

5. But what is implied in, "Children, obey your parents in all things?" Certainly the first point of obedience is to do nothing which your father or mother forbids, whether it be great or small. Nothing is more plain, than that the prohibition of a parent binds every conscientious child: that is, except the thing prohibited be clearly enjoined of God. Nor indeed is this all: the matter may be carried a little farther still. A tender parent may totally disapprove what he does not care flatly to forbid. What is the duty of a child in this case? How far is that disapprobation to be regarded? Whether it would be equivalent to a prohibition or not, a person who would have a conscience void of offence, should, undoubtedly, keep on the safe side, and avoid what may perhaps be evil. It is surely the more excellent way, to do nothing which you know your parents disapprove. To act otherwise seems to imply a degree of disobedience, which one of a tender conscience would wish to avoid.

6. The second thing implied in this direction is, Do every thing which your father or mother bids, be it great or small, provided it be not contrary to the command of God. Herein God has given a power to parents, which even sovereign princes have not. The King of England, for instance, is a sovereign Prince: yet he has not power to bid me do the least thing, unless the law of the land requires me so to do: for he has no power but to execute the law. The will of the King is no law to the subject. But the will of the parent is a law to the child: who is bound in conscience to

to submit thereto, unless it be contrary to the Law of God.

7. It is with admirable wisdom, that the Father of spirits has given this direction, that as the strength of the parents supplies the want of strength, and the understanding of their parents the want of understanding in their children, till they have strength and understanding of their own, so the will of the parents may guide that of their children, till they have wisdom and experience to guide themselves. This, therefore, is the very first thing, which children have to learn. That they are to obey their parents, to submit to their will in all things: and this they may be inured to, long before they understand the reason of it. And, indeed, long before they are capable of understanding any of the principles of religion. Accordingly, St. Paul directs all parents to bring up their children *in the discipline and doctrine of the Lord.* For their will may be broken by proper discipline, even in their early infancy; whereas it must be a considerable time after, before they are capable of instruction. This, therefore, is the first point of all; bow down their wills from the very first dawn of reason: and by habituating them to your will, prepare them for submitting to the will of their Father which is in heaven.

8. But how few children do we find, even of six or eight years old, that understand any thing of this! Indeed, how should they understand it, seeing they have none to teach them? Are not their parents, father as well as mother, fully as ignorant of the matter as themselves? Whom do you find, even among religious people, that have the least conception of it? Have not you seen the proof of it with your own eyes? Have not you been present, when a father or mother has said, "My child, do so or so?" The child, without any ceremony, answered peremptorily, "I won't." And the parent quietly passes it by, without any further notice. And does he or she not see, that by this cruel indulgence, they are training up their child by flat rebellion against their parents, to rebellion against God? Consequently they are training him up for the everlasting fire pre-

pared for the devil and his angels! Did they duly consider this, they would neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, till they had taught him a better lesson, and made him thoroughly afraid ever of giving that diabolical answer again.

9. Let me reason this case a little farther with you parents that fear God. If you *do* fear God, how dare you suffer a child above a year old to say, *I will do*, what you forbid; or *I won't do*, what you bid, and to go unpunished? Why do not you stop him at once, that he may never dare to say so again? Have you no bowels, no compassion for your child? No regard for his salvation or destruction? Would you suffer him to curse or swear in your presence, and take no notice of it? Why disobedience is as certain a way to damnation as cursing and swearing. Stop him, stop him at first, in the name of God. Do not *spare the rod*, and *spoil the child*. If you have not the heart of a tyger, do not give up your child to his own will, that is, to the devil. Though it be pain to yourself, yet pluck your offspring out of the lion's teeth. Make them submit, that they may not perish. Break their wills, that you may save their souls.

10. I cannot tell how to enforce this point sufficiently. To fix it upon your minds more strongly, permit me to add part of a letter on the subject, printed some years ago.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done, is to conquer their will. To inform their understanding is a work of time, and must proceed by slow degrees: but the subjecting the will is a thing which must be done at once: and the sooner the better. For, by our neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, which is hardly ever to be conquered; and never without using that severity, which would be as painful to us as to the children. Therefore, I call those cruel parents, who pass for kind and indulgent: who permit their children to contract habits, which they know must be afterwards broken.

"I insist upon conquering the wills of children betimes; because this is the only foundation for a religious education. When this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of

being governed by the reason of its parent, till its own understanding comes to maturity.

"I cannot yet dismiss this subject. As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, insures their after-wretchedness and irreligion; and whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we consider that religion is nothing else but the doing the will of God, and not our own: and that self-will being the grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness, no indulgence of it can be trivial; no denial of it unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his children, works together with God in the saving of a soul: the parent who indulges it, does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable; and does all that in him lies, to damn his child, soul and body, for ever!

"This, therefore, I cannot but earnestly repeat, Break their wills betimes. Begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plainly, or perhaps speak at all. Whatever pains it cost, conquer their stubbornness: break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you not to neglect, not to delay this! Therefore, 1, Let a child from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. In order to this, 2, Let him have nothing he cries for, absolutely nothing, great or small; else you undo your own work. 3, At all events, from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip him ten times running to effect it: let none persuade you, it is cruelty to do this: it is cruelty not to do it. Break his will now, and his soul will live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity."

11. On the contrary, how dreadful are the consequences of that accursed kindness, which gives children their own wills, and does not bow down their necks from their infancy. It is chiefly owing to this, that so many religious parents bring up their children that have no religion at all; children, that when they are grown up, have no regard for

them: perhaps set them at naught, and are ready to pick out their eyes! Why is this, but because their wills were not broken at first, because they were not inured from their early infancy, to obey their parents in all things, and to submit to their wills, as to the will of God! Because they were not taught from the very first dawn of reason, that the will of their parents was, to them, the will of God: that to resist it was rebellion against God, and an inlet to all ungodliness.

II. 1. This may suffice for the explication of the text: I proceed to the application of it. And permit me first to apply to you that are parents, and as such concerned to teach your children. Do you know these things yourselves? Are *you* thoroughly convinced of these important truths? Have you laid them to heart? And have you put them in practice, with regard to your own children? Have you inured them to discipline, before they were capable of instruction? Have you broken their wills from their earliest infancy? And do you still continue to do so, in opposition both to nature and custom? Did you explain to them, as soon as their understanding began to open, the reasons of your proceeding thus? Did you point out to them the will of God, as the sole law of every intelligent creature? And shew them, it is the will of God, that they should obey you in all things? Do you inculcate this over and over again, till they perfectly comprehend it? O never be weary of this labour of love: and your labour will not always be in vain.

2. At least, do not teach them to disobey, by rewarding them for disobedience. Remember! You do this every time you give them any thing because they cry for it. And herein they are apt scholars: if you reward them for crying, they will certainly cry again. So that there is no end, unless you make it a sacred rule, to give them nothing which they cry for. And the shortest way to do this is, Never suffer them to cry aloud. Train them up to obedience in this one instance, and you will easily bring them to obey in others. Why should you not begin to-day? Surely you

see what is the most excellent way: best for your own soul. Why then do you disobey? Because you are a coward; because you want resolution. And doubtless it requires no small patience, more than nature ever gave. But the grace of God is sufficient for you: you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. This grace is sufficient to give you diligence, as well as resolution: otherwise laziness will be as great a hindrance as cowardice. For without much pains you cannot conquer: nothing can be done with a slack hand, labour on: never tire: lay line upon line, till patience has its perfect work.

3. But there is another hindrance that is full as hard to be conquered as either laziness or cowardice. It is called fondness, and is usually mistaken for love: but, O, how widely different from it! It is real hate: and hate of the most mischievous kind, tending to destroy both body and soul in hell! O give not way to it any longer, no, not for a moment! Fight against it with your might! For the love of God; for the love of your children; for the love of your own soul!

4. I have one word more to say to parents; to mothers in particular. If, in spite of all the Apostle can say, you encourage your children by your example, to *adorn* themselves *with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel*, you and they must drop into the pit together. But if they do it, though you set them a better example, still it is yours, as well as their fault. For if you did not put any ornament on your little child that you would not wear yourself, (which would be utter distraction, and far more inexcusable than putting it on your own arms or head,) yet you did not inure them to obey you from their infancy, and teach them the duty of it, from at least two years old. Otherwise they would not have dared to do any thing, great or small, contrary to your will. Whenever, therefore, I see the fine-dressed daughter of a plain-dressed mother, I see at once the mother is defective either in knowledge or religion. Either she is ignorant of her own or her child's duty; or she has not practised what she knows.

5. I cannot dismiss this subject yet. I am pained continually, at seeing religious parents suffer their children to run into the same folly of dress, as if they had no religion at all. In God's name, why do you suffer them to vary a hair's breadth from *your* example? "Why, they will do it?" They will! Whose fault is that? Why did not you break their will from their infancy? At least, do it now: better late than never. It should have been done before they were two years old. It may be done at eight or ten, though with far more difficulty. However, do it now: and accept that difficulty, as the just reward for your past neglect. Now, at least, carry your point, whatever it costs. Be not mealy-mouthed, say not, like foolish Eli, "Nay, my children; it is no good report which I hear of you;" instead of restraining them with a strong hand; but speak (though as calmly as possible, yet) firmly and peremptorily, "I will have it so;" and do as you say. Instill diligently into them the love of plain dress, and hatred of finery. Shew them the reason of your own plainness of dress, and shew it is equally reasonable for them. Bid defiance to indolence, to cowardice, to foolish fondness, and at all events, carry your point; if you love their souls, make and keep them just as plain as yourselves. And I charge you, grand-mothers, before God, do not hinder your daughters herein. Do not dare to give the child any thing which the mother denies. Never take the part of the children against the parent; never blame her before them. If you do not strengthen her authority, at least do not weaken it: but if you have either sense or piety left, help her on in the work of real kindness.

6. Permit me now to apply myself to you, Children: particularly, you that are the children of religious parents. Indeed, if you have no fear of God before your eyes, I have no concern with you at present: but if you have, if you really fear God, and have a desire to please him, you desire to understand all his commandments, the fifth in particular. Did you ever understand it yet? Do you now understand what is your duty to your father and mother? Do you

know, at least do you consider, That by the divine appointment *their* Will is a Law to *you?* Have you ever considered the extent of that obedience to your parents which God requires? *Children, obey your parents in all things.* No exception, but of things unlawful. Have you practised your duty in this extent? Did you ever so much as intend it?

7. Deal faithfully with your own souls. Is your conscience now clear in this matter? Do you do nothing which you know to be contrary to the will either of your father or mother? Do you never do any thing, (though ever so much inclined to it,) which he or she forbids? Do you abstain from every thing which they dislike, as far as you can in conscience? On the other hand, are you careful to do, whatever a parent bids? Do you study and contrive how to please them? To make their lives as easy and pleasant as you can? Whoever you are that add this to your general care to please God in all things, Blessed art thou of the Lord! "Thy days shall be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

8. But as for you who are little concerned about this matter, who do not make it a point of conscience, to obey your parents in all things, but sometimes obey them, as it happens, and sometimes not, who frequently do what they forbid or disapprove, and neglect what they bid you do: suppose you awake out of sleep, that you begin to feel yourself a sinner, and begin to cry to God for mercy, is it any wonder that you find no answer, while you are under the guilt of unrepented sin? How can you expect mercy from God till you obey your parents? But suppose you have, by an uncommon miracle of mercy, tasted of the pardoning love of God, can it be expected, although you hunger and thirst after righteousness, after the perfect love of God, that you should ever attain it, ever be satisfied therewith, while you live in outward sin, in the wilful transgression of a known law of God, in disobedience to your parents? Is it not rather a wonder, that he has not withdrawn his Holy Spirit from you? That he still con-

tinues to strive with you, though you continually grieve his Spirit? O grieve him no more: By the grace of God obey them in all things from this moment! As soon as you come home, as soon as you set foot within the door, begin an entirely new course: look upon your father and mother with new eyes: see them as representing your Father which is in heaven: and let it be your constant endeavour, study, and desire to please, to help, and to obey them in all things. Behave not barely as their child, but as their servant for Christ's sake. O how will you then love one another! In a manner unknown before. God will bless you to them, and them to you: all around will feel that God is with you of a truth. Many shall see it and praise God: and the fruit of it shall remain when both you and they are lodged in Abraham's Bosom.

SERMON CII.

ON OBEDIENCE TO PASTORS.

HEBREWS XIII. 17.

"*Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch over your Souls, as they that shall give Account, that they may do this with Joy, and not with Grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*"

1. EXCEEDINGLY few, not only among nominal Christians, but among truly religious men, have any clear conception of the important Doctrine, which is here delivered by the Apostle. Very many scarcely think of it, and hardly know that there is any such direction in the Bible. And the greater part of those who know it is there, and imagine they follow it, do not understand it, but lean too much either to the right hand or to the left, to one extreme or the other. It is well known to what an extravagant height the Romanists in general carry this direction. Many of them believe an implicit faith is due to the doctrines delivered by those that rule over them, and that implicit obedience ought to be paid, to whatever commands they give: and not much less has been insisted on, by several eminent men of the Church of England. Although it is true that the generality of Protestants are apt to run to the other extreme: allowing their Pastors no authority at all, but making them both the creatures and the servants of

their congregations. And very many there are of our own Church who agree with them herein: supposing the Pastors to be altogether dependent upon the people; who, in their judgment, have a right to direct, as well as to choose their Ministers.

2. But is it not possible, to find a medium between these two extremes? Is there any necessity for us to run, either into one or into the other? If we set human laws out of the question, and simply attend to the Oracles of God, we may certainly discover a middle path in this important matter. In order thereto, let us carefully examine the words of the Apostle above recited. Let us consider,

I. Who are the Persons mentioned in the Text, *they that rule over us?*

II. Who are they whom the Apostle directs, to *obey and submit themselves* to them?

III. What is the meaning of this Direction? In what sense are they to *obey and submit themselves?*—I shall then endeavour to make a suitable Application of the whole.

I. 1. Consider we, first, who are the Persons mentioned in the text, *they that have the rule over you?* I do not conceive that the words of the Apostle are properly translated; because this translation makes the sentence little better than tautology. If they *rule over you*, you are certainly ruled by them: so that according to this translation, you are only enjoined to do what you do already: to obey those whom you do obey. Now there is another meaning of the Greek word, which seems abundantly more proper: it means to *guide*, as well as to rule. And thus, it seems, it should be taken here. The direction, then, when applied to our spiritual guides, is plain and pertinent.

2. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the seventh verse; which fixes the meaning of this. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God." The Apostle here shews, by the latter clause of the sentence, whom he meant in the former. Those that *were over them* were the same persons *who spake unto them the word of God:* that is, they

were their Pastors, those who guided and fed this part of the flock of Christ.

3. But by whom are these Guides to be appointed? And what are they supposed to do, in order to be entitled to the Obedience which is here prescribed?

Volumes upon volumes have been written on that knotty question, *By whom are Guides of Souls to be appointed?* I do not intend here, to enter at all, into the dispute concerning Church-Government: neither to debate, whether it be advantageous or prejudicial to the interest of true religion, that the Church and State should be blended together, as they have been ever since the time of Constantine, in every part of the Roman Empire, where Christianity has been received. Waving all these points, (which may find employment enough for men that abound in leisure,) by them that guide you, I mean, them that do it, if not by your choice, at least by your consent: them that you willingly accept of to be your guides in the way to Heaven.

4. But what are they supposed to do, in order to entitle them to the Obedience here prescribed?

They are supposed to go before the flock, (as is the manner of the Eastern Shepherds to this day,) and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness: they are to "nourish them with the Words of eternal Life," to feed them with the "pure milk of the Word:" applying it continually *for Doctrine*, teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein: *for Reproof*, warning them if they turn aside from the way to the right hand or to the left: *for Correction*, shewing them how to amend what is amiss, and guiding them back into the way of peace: and *for Instruction in Righteousness*, training them up to outward holiness, "until they come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

5. They are supposed to "watch over your souls, as those that shall give Account." *As those that shall give Account!* How unspeakably solemn, and awful are those words! May God write them upon the heart of every guide of souls!

They watch, waking while others sleep, over the flock of Christ; over the souls that he has bought with a price, that he has purchased with his own Blood. They have them in their hearts both by day and by night; regarding neither sleep nor food in comparison of them. Even while they sleep, their heart is waking, full of concern for their beloved children. *They watch* with deep earnestness, with uninterrupted seriousness, with unwearied care, patience, and diligence, as they that are about to give an account of every particular soul, to him that standeth at the door, to the Judge of quick and dead.

II. 1. We are, Secondly, to consider, Who those are whom the Apostle directs to obey them that have the rule over them? And in order to determine this, with certainty and clearness, we shall not appeal to human institutions, but simply, (as in answering the preceding question,) appeal to that decision of it, which we find in the Oracles of God. Indeed we have hardly occasion to go one step farther than the text itself. Only it may be proper, first, to remove out of the way some popular opinions, which have been almost every where taken for granted, but can in no-wise be proved.

2. It is usually supposed, first, That the Apostle is here directing *Parishioners* to obey and submit themselves to the *Minister* of their Parish. But can any one bring the least shadow of proof for this from the Holy Scripture? Where is it written, that we are bound to obey any Minister, because we live in what is called his Parish? "Yes," you say, "we are bound to obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." True, in all things indifferent; but this is not so: it is exceeding far from it. It is far from being a thing indifferent to *me*, Who is the guide of my soul. I dare not receive one as my guide to heaven, that is himself in the high road to hell. I dare not take a wolf for my shepherd, that has not so much as sheep's clothing; that is a common swearer, an open drunkard, a notorious sabbath-breaker. And such (the more is the shame, and the more the pity) are many Parochial Ministers at this day.

3. "But are you not properly members of that congregation, to which your parents belong?" I do not apprehend that I am: I know no scripture that obliges me to this. I owe all deference to the commands of my parents, and willingly obey them in all things lawful. But it is not lawful to *call them Rabbi*, that is, to believe or obey them implicitly. Every one must give an account of himself to God. Therefore, every man must judge for himself: especially in a point of so deep importance as this is, the choice of a guide for his soul.

4. But we may bring this matter to a short issue, by recurring to the very words of the text. They that have voluntarily connected themselves with such a Pastor, as answers the description given therein: such as do, in fact, "watch over their souls, as they that shall give account:" such as do "nourish them up with the words of eternal life;" such as feed them as with the "pure milk of the word," and constantly apply it to them "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness:" all who have found and chosen Guides of this character, of this spirit and behaviour, are undoubtedly required by the Apostle, to *obey and submit themselves* to them.

III. 1. But what is the Meaning of this Direction? This remains to be considered. In what sense, and how far does the Apostle direct them, to *obey and submit to their* spiritual guides?

If we attend to the proper sense of the two words here used by the Apostle, we may observe that the former of them (πειθεσθε, from πειθω, *to persuade*) refers to the understanding, the latter, υπειχετε, to the will and outward behaviour. To begin with the former. What influence ought our spiritual guides to have over our understanding? We dare no more call our spiritual fathers Rabbi, than the *fathers of our flesh*. We dare no more yield implicit faith to the former than to the latter. In this sense *one is our Master*, (or rather *Teacher*,) *who is in Heaven*. But whatever submission, of even our understanding is short of this, we may, nay, we ought to yield to them.

2. To explain this a little farther. St. James uses a word which is nearly allied to the former of these; "The wisdom which is from above is, ευπειθης, easy to be convinced, or to be persuaded." Now if we ought to have, and to show this wisdom toward all men, we ought to have it in a more eminent degree, and to show it upon every occasion, toward those that *watch over our souls*. With regard to these, above all other men, we should be *easy to be intreated:* easily convinced of any truth, and easily persuaded to any thing that is not sinful.

3. A word of nearly the same import with this, is frequently used by St. Paul; namely, επιεικης. In our translation, it is more than once rendered *gentle*. But perhaps it might be more properly rendered (if the word may be allowed) *yielding;* ready to *yield*, to give up our own will, in every thing that is not a point of duty. This amiable temper every real Christian enjoys, and shews in his intercourse with all men. But he shews it in a peculiar manner toward those that watch over his soul. He is not only willing to receive any instruction from them, to be convinced of any thing which he did not know before; to lie open to their advice, and glad to receive admonition, or reproof: but is ready to give up his own will, whenever he can do it with a clear conscience. Whatever they desire him to do, he does; if it be not forbidden in the word of God. Whatever they desire him to refrain from, he does so; if it be not enjoined in the Word of God. This is implied in those words of the Apostle, "Submit yourselves to them: yield to them:" give up your own will. This is meet, and right, and your bounden duty, if they do indeed watch over your souls, as they that shall give account. If you do thus *obey and submit yourselves to them*, they will give an account of you *with joy, not with groaning*, as they must otherwise do: for although they should be clear of your blood, yet *that would be unprofitable to you:* yea, a prelude to eternal damnation.

4. How acceptable to God was an instance of obedience, somewhat similar to this: You have a large and particular

account of it, in the thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah. "The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, Go to the house of the Rechabites, and give them wine to drink. Then I took the whole house of the Rechabites," (all the heads of their families,) "and set before them pots full of wine, and said unto them, Drink ye wine: but they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab," (a great man in the reign of Jehu,) "the son of Rechab," from whom we are named, being the father of our family, "commanded us, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab our father, in all that he charged us." We do not know any particular reason why Jonadab gave this charge to his posterity. But as it was not sinful, they gave this strong instance of gratitude to their great benefactor. And how pleasing this was to the Father of their spirits, we learn from the words that follow: "And Jeremiah said unto the Rechabites, Because ye have obeyed the voice of Jonadab, your father, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before my face for ever."

5. Now it is certain, Christians owe full as much gratitude and obedience, to those that watch over their souls, as ever the house of the Rechabites owed to Jonadab the son of Rechab. And we cannot doubt, but he is as well pleased with our obedience to these, as ever he was with their obedience to Jonadab. If he was so well-pleased with the gratitude and obedience of this people to their temporal benefactor, have we not all reason to believe, He is fully as well-pleased with the gratitude and obedience of Christians to those who derive far greater blessings to them, than ever Jonadab conveyed to his posterity?

6. It may be of use yet again to consider, In what instances it is the duty of Christians to obey and submit themselves to those that watch over their souls. Now the things which they enjoin, must be either enjoined of God, or forbidden by him, or indifferent. In things forbidden of God, we dare not obey them; for we are to obey God rather than man. In things enjoined of God, we do not

properly obey *them*, but our common Father. Therefore, if we are to obey them at all, it must be in things indifferent. The sum is, It is the duty of every private Christian, to obey his spiritual Pastor, by either doing or leaving undone any thing of an indifferent nature; any thing that is in no way determined in the Word of God.

7. But how little is this understood in the *Protestant* World! At least, in England and Ireland. Who is there, even among those that are supposed to be good Christians, who dreams there is such a duty as this? And yet there is not a more express command, either in the Old or New Testament. No words can be more clear and plain; no command more direct and positive. Therefore, certainly none who receive the Scripture as the Word of God, can live in the habitual breach of this, and plead innocence. Such an instance of wilful, or, at least, careless disobedience, must grieve the Holy Spirit of God. It cannot but hinder the grace of God from having its full effect upon the heart. It is not improbable, that this very disobedience may be one cause of the deadness of many souls: one reason of their not receiving those blessings, which they seek with some degree of sincerity.

8. It remains only to make a short Application of what has now been delivered.

You that read this, do you apply it to yourself? Do you examine yourself thereby? Do not *you* stop your own growth in grace, if not by wilful disobedience to this command; yet by careless inattention to it, by not considering it as the importance of it deserves? If so, you defraud yourself of many blessings, which you might enjoy. Or, are you of a better mind, of a more excellent spirit? Is it your fixed resolution and your constant endeavour, "to obey them that have the rule over you in the Lord?" To *submit yourself* as cheerfully to your spiritual, as to your natural parents? Do you ask, "Wherein should I submit to them?" The answer has been given already: not in things enjoined of God: not in things forbidden by him; but in things indifferent: in all that are not determined one

way or the other, by the Oracles of God. It is true, this cannot be done in some instances, without a considerable degree of self-denial, when they advise you to refrain from something that is agreeable to flesh and blood. And it cannot be obeyed in other instances, without taking up your cross; without suffering some pain or inconvenience, that is not agreeable to flesh and blood. For that solemn declaration of our Lord has place here, as well as on a thousand other occasions, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple." But this will not affright you, if you resolve to be, not only almost, but altogether a Christian: if you determine to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life.

9. I would now apply myself in a more particular manner to *you*, who desire *me* to watch over your souls. Do *you* make it a point of conscience, to obey me for my Master's sake? To *submit yourselves to me* in things indifferent; things not determined in the Word of God? In all things that are not enjoined, nor yet forbidden in Scripture? Are you "easy to be entreated," as by men in general, so by me in particular?—Easy to be convinced of any truth, however contrary to your former prejudices?—And easy to be persuaded to do or forbear any indifferent thing at *my* desire? You cannot but see, that all this is contained in the very words of the text. And you cannot but acknowledge, that it is highly reasonable for you so to do, if I do employ all my time, all my substance, all my strength both of body and soul, not in seeking my own honour, or pleasure; but in promoting your present and eternal salvation: if I do indeed "watch over your souls as one that must give account."

10. Do you then take my advice (I ask in the presence of God and all the world) with regard to *Dress?* I published that advice above thirty years ago; I have repeated it a thousand times since. I have advised you not to be conformable to the world herein: to lay aside all needless ornaments; to avoid all expense; to be patterns of plainness to all that are round about you. Have you taken this

advice? Have you all, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, laid aside all those needless ornaments, which I particularly objected to? Are you all exemplarily plain in your apparel? As plain as Quakers (so called) or Moravians? If not, if you are still dressed like the generality of people of your own rank and fortune, you declare hereby, to all the world, that you will not obey them that are over you in the Lord. You declare, in open defiance of God and man, that you will not *submit yourselves* to them. Many of you carry your sins on your forehead, openly and in the face of the sun. You harden your hearts against instruction and against conviction: you harden one another: especially those of you that were once convinced, and have now stifled your convictions. You encourage one another to stop your ears against the truth, and shut your eyes against the light, lest haply you should see, that you are fighting against God, and against your own souls. If I were now called to give an account of you, it would be *with groans, and not with joy*. And sure that would be *unprofitable for you:* the loss would fall upon your own head.

11. I speak all this on supposition, (though that is a supposition not to be made,) that the Bible was silent on this head: that the Scriptures said nothing concerning *Dress*, and left it to every one's own discretion. But if all other texts were silent, this is enough, "Submit yourselves to them that are over you in the Lord." I bind this upon your consciences, in the sight of God. Were it only in obedience to this direction, you cannot be clear before God, unless you throw aside all needless ornaments, in utter defiance of that tyrant of fools, *fashion;* unless you seek only to be adorned with good works, as men and women professing godliness.

12. Perhaps you will say, "This is only a little thing: it is a mere trifle." I answer, If it be, you are the more inexcusable before God and man. What! will you disobey a plain command of God for *a mere trifle?* God forbid! Is it a trifle to sin against God?—To set his

authority at nought? Is this a little thing? Nay, remember, There can be no little sin, till we can find a little god! Mean time, be assured of one thing: the more conscientiously you obey your spiritual guides, the more powerfully will God apply the word, which they speak in his Name to your heart! The more plentifully will he water what is spoken, with the dew of his blessing: and the more proofs will you have, it is not only they that speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in them.

SERMON CIII.

ON VISITING THE SICK.

MATTHEW XXV. 36.

"*I was sick, and ye visited me.*"

1. IT is generally supposed that *the Means of Grace*, and *the ordinances of* GOD, are equivalent terms. We commonly mean by that expression, those that are usually termed, *Works of Piety*, viz. hearing and reading the Scripture, receiving the Lord's Supper, public and private prayer, and fasting. And it is certain, these are the ordinary channels which convey the grace of God to the souls of men. But are they the only means of grace? Are there no other means than these, whereby God is pleased, frequently, yea ordinarily to convey his grace to them that either love or fear him? Surely there are Works of Mercy, as well as Works of Piety, which are real means of grace. They are more especially such to those that perform them with a single eye. And those that neglect them, do not receive the grace which otherwise they might. Yea, and they lose, by a continual neglect, the grace which they had received. Is it not hence, that many who were once strong in faith, are now weak and feeble-minded? And yet they are not sensible whence that weakness comes, as they neglect none of the ordinances of God. But they might see whence it comes, were they seriously to consider St. Paul's

account of all true believers; "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we might walk therein," Eph. ii. 10.

2. The walking herein is essentially necessary, as to the continuance of that *faith* whereby we *are* already *saved by grace*, so to the attainment of everlasting salvation. Of this we cannot doubt, if we seriously consider, that these are the very words of the great Judge himself, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me," Matt. xxv. 34, &c. "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me." If this do not convince you that the continuance in works of mercy, is necessary to salvation, consider what the Judge of all says to those on the left hand. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat: thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, neither have ye done it unto me." You see, were it for this alone, they must *depart* from God *into everlasting punishment*.

3. Is it not strange, that this important truth should be so little understood, or at least should so little influence the practice of them that fear God? Suppose this representation be true, suppose the Judge of all the earth speak right, those, and those only that feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, relieve the stranger, visit those that are in prison, according to their power and opportunity, shall *inherit the everlasting kingdom*. And those that do not, shall "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

4. I purpose, at present, to confine my discourse to one

article of these, *visiting the sick:* a plain duty, which all that are in health may practise, in a higher or lower degree: and which, nevertheless, is almost universally neglected, even by those that profess to love God. And touching this I would enquire,

I. What is implied in visiting the sick;

II. How is it to be performed;—And,

III. By whom.

I. First, I would enquire, What is the nature of this duty: What is implied in *visiting the sick.*

1. By the sick I do not mean only those that keep their bed, or that are sick in the strictest sense. Rather I would include, all such as are in a state of affliction, whether of mind or body: and that, whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not.

2. "But is there need of visiting them in person? May we not relieve them at a distance? Does it not answer the same purpose, if we send them help, as if we carry it ourselves?" Many are so circumstanced, that they cannot attend the sick in person; and where this is the real case, it is, undoubtedly, sufficient for them to send help, being the only expedient they can use. But this is not properly *visiting the sick:* it is another thing. The word which we render *visit,* in its literal acceptation, means to *look upon.* And this, you well know, cannot be done, unless you are present with them. To send them assistance is, therefore, entirely a different thing from visiting them. The former then ought to be done, but the latter not left undone.

"But I send a Physician to those that are sick: and he can do them more good than I can." He can in one respect: he can do them more good with regard to their bodily health. But he cannot do them more good with regard to their souls, which are of infinitely greater importance. And if he could, this would not excuse *you:* his going would not fulfil *your* duty. Neither would it do the same good to *you,* unless you saw them with your own eyes. If you do not, you lose a mean of grace: you lose an excellent mean of increasing your thankfulness to

God, who saves you from this pain and sickness, and continues your health and strength: as well as of increasing your sympathy with the afflicted, your benevolence, and all social affections.

3. One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the Poor, is because they so seldom visit them. Hence it is, that, according to the common observation, one part of the world does not know what the other suffers. Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it: and then plead their voluntary ignorance, as an excuse for their hardness of heart. "Indeed, Sir," (said a person of large substance) "I am a very compassionate man. But to tell you the truth, I do not know any body in the world that is in want." How did this come to pass? Why, he took good care to keep out of their way. And if he fell upon any of them unawares, *he passed over on the other side.*

4. How contrary to this are both the spirit and behaviour of even people of the highest rank in a neighbouring nation! In Paris, ladies of the first quality, yea, princesses of the blood, of the Royal Family, constantly visit the sick, particularly the patients in the Grand Hospital. And they not only take care to relieve their wants, (if they need any thing more than is provided for them,) but attend on their sick-beds, dress their sores, and perform the meanest offices for them. Here is a pattern for the English, poor or rich, mean or honourable! For many years we have abundantly copied after the follies of the French. Let us for once copy after their wisdom and virtue, worthy the imitation of the whole Christian world. Let not the gentlewomen, or even the countesses in England, be ashamed to imitate those princesses of the blood! Here is a fashion that does honour to human nature. It began in France; but God forbid it should end there!

5. And if your delicacy will not permit you to imitate those truly honourable ladies; by abasing yourselves in the manner which they do, by performing the lowest offices for the sick; you may, however, without humbling your-

selves so far, supply them with whatever they want. And you may administer help of a more excellent kind, by supplying their spiritual wants: instructing them, (if they need such instruction,) in the first principles of religion: endeavouring to shew them the dangerous state they are in, under the wrath and curse of God through sin, and pointing them to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Beside this general instruction, you might have abundant opportunities of comforting those that are in pain of body or distress of mind: you might find opportunities of strengthening the feeble-minded, quickening those that are faint and weary; and of building up those that have believed, and encouraging them to "go on to perfection." But these things you must do in your own person: you see, they cannot be done by proxy. Or suppose you could give the same relief to the sick by another, you could not reap the same advantage to yourself. You could not gain that increase in lowliness, in patience, in tenderness of spirit, in sympathy with the afflicted, which you might have gained, if you had assisted them in person. Neither would you receive the same recompense in the resurrection of the just, when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."

II. 1. I proceed to enquire in the second place, How are we to visit them? In what manner may this labour of love be most effectually performed? How may we do this, most to the glory of God, and to the benefit of our neighbour? But before ever you enter upon the work, you should be deeply convinced, that you are by no means sufficient for it: you have neither sufficient grace, nor sufficient understanding, to perform it in the most excellent manner. And this will convince you of the necessity of applying to the Strong for strength, and of flying to the Father of Lights, the Giver of every good Gift, for wisdom: ever remembering, "There is a Spirit in man that giveth wisdom, and the Inspiration of the Holy One that giveth understanding." Whenever, therefore, you are about to enter upon the work, seek his help by earnest prayer.

Cry to him for the whole spirit of humility, lest if pride steal into your heart, if you ascribe any thing to yourself, while you strive to save others, you destroy your own soul. Before and through the work, from the beginning to the end, let your heart wait upon him for a continual supply of meekness and gentleness, of patience and long-suffering, that you may never be angry or discouraged, at whatever treatment, rough or smooth, kind or unkind, you may meet with. Be not moved with the deep ignorance of some, the dulness and amazing stupidity of others: marvel not at their peevishness or stubbornness, at their non-improvement after all the pains that you have taken; yea, at some of them turning back to perdition, and being worse than they were before. Still your record is with the Lord, and your reward with the Most High.

2. As to the particular method of treating the sick. You need not tie yourself down to any; but may continually vary your manner of proceeding, as various circumstances may require. But it may not be amiss, usually to begin with enquiring into their outward condition. You may ask, Whether they have the necessaries of life: Whether they have sufficient food and raiment: If the weather be cold, Whether they have fewel: Whether they have needful attendance: Whether they have proper advice, with regard to their bodily disorder; especially if it be of a dangerous kind. In several of these respects you may be able to give them some assistance yourself: and you may move those that are more able than you, to supply your lack of service. You might properly say in your own case, "To beg I am ashamed:" but never be ashamed to beg for the Poor; yea, in this case, be an importunate beggar: do not easily take a denial. Use all the address, all the understanding, all the influence you have: at the same time trusting in him that has the hearts of all men in his hands.

3. You will then easily discern, whether there is any good office, which you can do for them with your hands. Indeed most of the things which are needful to be done, those about them can do better than you. But in some you

may have more skill, or more experience than they. And if you have, let not delicacy or honour stand in your way. Remember his word, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me." And think nothing too mean to do for him. Rejoice to be abased for his sake.

4. These little labours of love will pave your way to things of greater importance. Having shewn that you have a regard for their bodies, you may proceed to enquire concerning their souls. And here you have a large field before you: you have scope for exercising all the talents which God has given you. May you not begin with asking, Have you ever considered, that God governs the world?—that his Providence is over all?—and over *you* in particular? Does any thing then befall you without his knowledge?—or without his designing it for your good? He knows all you suffer: he knows all your pains: he sees all your wants. He sees, not only your affliction in general, but every particular circumstance of it. Is he not looking down from heaven, and disposing all these things for your profit? You may then enquire, whether the sick person is acquainted with the general principles of religion. And afterwards, lovingly and gently examine, Whether his life has been agreeable thereto. Whether he has been an outward, bare-faced sinner, or has had a form of religion. See next, whether he know any thing of the power. Of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth." If he does not, endeavour to explain to him, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" and, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When he begins to understand the Nature of Holiness, and the Necessity of the New Birth, then you may press upon him "repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

5. When you find any of them begin to fear God, it will be proper to give them one after another, some plain Tracts, as the Instructions for Christians; Awake, thou that sleepest; and The Nature and Design of Christianity. At

the next visit you may enquire, What they have read;—what they remember;—and what they understand. And then will be the time to enforce what they understand, and if possible, impress it on their hearts. Be sure to conclude every meeting with prayer. If you cannot yet pray without a form, you may use some of those composed by Mr. Spinkes, or any other pious writer. But the sooner you break through this backwardness, the better. Ask of God, and he will open your mouth.

6. Together with the more important lessons, which you endeavour to teach all the poor whom you visit, it would be a deed of charity to teach them two things more, which they are generally little acquainted with: industry and cleanliness. It was said by a pious man, *Cleanliness is next to Godliness.* Indeed the want of it is a scandal to all religion; causing the way of truth to be evil spoken of. And without industry we are neither fit for this world, nor for the world to come. With regard to both, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

III. 1. The third point to be considered is, By whom is this duty to be performed? The answer is ready, By all that desire to *inherit the kingdom* of their Father, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. For thus saith the Lord, *Come, ye blessed:—inherit the kingdom:—for I was sick, and ye visited me.* And to those on the left hand, *Depart, ye cursed;—for I was sick, and ye visited me not.* Does not this plainly imply, that as all who do this, are "blessed," and shall "inherit the kingdom:" so all who do it not, are "cursed," and shall "depart into everlasting fire."

2. All, therefore, who desire to escape everlasting fire, and to inherit the everlasting kingdom, are equally concerned, according to their power, to practise this important duty. It is equally incumbent on young and old, rich and poor, men and women, according to their ability. None are so young, if they desire to save their own souls, as to be excused from assisting their neighbours. None are so poor, (unless they want the necessaries of life,) but they

are called to do something more or less, at whatever time they can spare, for the relief and comfort of their afflicted fellow-sufferers.

3. But those "who are rich in this world," who have more than the conveniences of life, are peculiarly called of God to this blessed work, and pointed out to it by his gracious Providence. As you are not under a necessity of working for your bread, you have your time at your own disposal. You may, therefore, allot some part of it every day for this labour of love. If it be practicable, it is far best to have a fixed hour, (for *any time*, we say, *is no time*,) and not to employ that time in any other business, without urgent necessity. You have likewise a peculiar advantage over many, by your station in life. Being superior in rank to them, you have the more influence on that very account. Your inferiors, of course, look up to you with a kind of reverence. And the condescension which you shew in visiting them, gives them a prejudice in your favour, which inclines them to hear you with attention, and willingly receive what you say. Improve this prejudice to the uttermost for the benefit of their souls, as well as their bodies. While you are eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless, see that you still keep a higher end in view, even the saving of souls from death, and that you labour to make all you say and do, subservient to that great end.

4. "But have *the Poor* themselves any part or lot in this matter? Are they any way concerned in visiting the sick? What can they give to others, who have hardly the conveniences, or perhaps necessaries of life for themselves?" If they have not, yet they need not be wholly excluded from the blessing which attends the practice of this duty. Even those may remember that excellent rule, "Let our conveniences give way to our neighbour's necessities; and our necessities give way to our neighbour's extremities." And few are so poor, as not to be able sometimes to give *two mites*: but if they are not, if they have no money to give, may they not give what is of more value? Yea, of more

value than thousands of gold and silver? If you speak "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," may not the words you speak, be health to the soul, and marrow to the bones? Can you give them nothing? Nay, in administering to them the grace of God, you give them more than all this world is worth! Go on, go on, thou poor disciple of a poor Master! Do as he did in the days of his flesh. Whenever thou hast an opportunity, go about doing good, and healing all that are oppressed of the devil: encouraging them to shake off his chains, and flee immediately to him,

"Who sets the prisoners free, and breaks
The iron bondage from their necks."

Above all, give them your prayers. Pray with them: pray for them. And who knows but you may save their souls alive?

5. You that are *old*, whose feet are ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, may not you do a little more good, before you go hence and are no more seen? O remember,

"'Tis time to live, if you grow old:
Of little life the best to make,
And manage wisely the last stake!"

As you have lived many years, it may be hoped you have attained such knowledge as may be of use to others. You have certainly more knowledge of men, which is commonly learned by dear-bought experience. With what strength you have left, employ the few moments you have to spare, in ministering to those who are weaker than yourselves. Your grey hairs will not fail to give you authority, and add weight to what you speak. You may frequently urge, to increase their attention,

"Believe me, youth; for I am read in cares,
And groan beneath the weight of more than threescore years."

You have frequently been a sufferer yourself; perhaps are so still. So much the more give them all the assistance you can, both with regard to their souls and bodies,

before they and you go to the place whence you will not return.

6. On the other hand, you that are *young* have several advantages that are almost peculiar to yourselves. You have generally a flow of spirits, and a liveliness of temper, which, by the grace of God, make you willing to undertake, and capable of performing many good works, at which others would be discouraged. And you have your health and strength of body, whereby you are eminently qualified, to assist the sick and those that have no strength. You are able to take up and carry the crosses, which may be expected to lie in the way. Employ then your whole vigour of body and mind, in ministering to your afflicted brethren. And bless God that you have them to employ in so honourable a service: like those heavenly *servants of his that do his pleasure*, by continually ministering to the heirs of salvation.

7. "But may not *women* as well as men, bear a part in this honourable service?" Undoubtedly they may: nay, they ought: it is their meet, right, and their bounden duty. Herein there is no difference: "there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus." Indeed it has long passed for a maxim with many, that "women are only to be seen; not heard." And accordingly many of them are brought up in such a manner, as if they were only designed for agreeable play-things! But is this doing honour to the sex? Or is it a real kindness to them? No; it is the deepest unkindness: it is horrid cruelty: it is mere Turkish barbarity. And I know not how any woman of sense and spirit can submit to it. Let all you that have it in your power assert the right, which the God of nature has given you. Yield not to that vile bondage any longer. You, as well as men, are rational creatures. You, like them, were made in the image of God: you are equally candidates for immortality. You too are called of God, as you have time, to "do good unto all men." Be "not disobedient to the heavenly calling." Whenever you have opportunity, do all the good you can, particularly to your poor sick neigh-

bours. And every one of *you* likewise, "shall receive *your* own reward according to *your* own labour."

8. It is well known, that in the Primitive Church, there were women particularly appointed for this work. Indeed there was one or more such in every Christian congregation under heaven. They were then termed Deaconesses, that is, Servants: servants of the Church and of its great Master. Such was Phebe, (mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. xvi. 1,) "a Deaconess of the Church of Cenchrea." It is true, most of these were women in years, and well experienced in the work of God. But were the young wholly excluded from that service? No: neither need they be, provided they know in whom they have believed, and show that they are holy of heart, by being holy in all manner of conversation. Such a Deaconess, if she answered her picture, was Mr. Law's Miranda. Would any one object to her visiting and relieving the sick and poor, because she was a woman? Nay, and a young one too? Do any of you that are young desire to tread in her steps? Have you a pleasing form? An agreeable address? So much the better, if you are wholly devoted to God. He will use these, if your eye be single, to make your words strike the deeper. And while you minister to others, how many blessings may redound into your own bosom! Hereby your natural levity may be destroyed, your fondness for trifles cured, your wrong tempers corrected, your evil habits weakened, until they are rooted out. And you will be prepared to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, in every future scene of life; only be very wary, if you visit or converse with those of the other sex, lest your affections be entangled, on one side or the other, and so you find a curse instead of a blessing.

9. Seeing then this is a duty to which we are called, rich and poor, young and old, male and female; (and it would be well if parents would train up their children herein, as well as in saying their prayers and going to Church:) let the time past suffice that almost all of us have neglected it, as by general consent. O what need has every one of us to

say, "Lord, forgive me my sins of omission!" Well, in the Name of God let us now from this day set about it with general consent. And I pray, let it never go out of your mind, that this is a duty which you cannot perform by proxy: unless in one case; unless you are disabled by your own pain or weakness. In that only case, it suffices to send the relief which you would otherwise give. Begin, my dear brethren, begin now, else the impression which you now feel will wear off; and, possibly, it may never return! What then will be the consequence? Instead of hearing the word, "Come, ye blessed—For I was sick and ye visited me:" you must hear that awful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed!—For I was sick and ye visited me not!"

SERMON CIV.

THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PREACHED BEFORE THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

MATTHEW XXV. 34.

" *Come, ye blessed of my* FATHER! *Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.*"

1. REASON alone will convince every fair enquirer, That God, " is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This alone teaches him to say, " Doubtless there is a reward for the righteous :" " There is a God that judgeth the earth." But how little information do we receive from unassisted reason, touching the particulars contained in this general truth! As eye hath not seen, or ear heard, so neither could it naturally enter into our hearts to conceive, the circumstances of that awful Day, wherein God will judge the world. No information of this kind could be given, but from the great Judge himself. And what an amazing instance of condescension it is, that the Creator, the Governor, the Lord, the Judge of all, should deign to give us so clear and particular an account of that solemn transaction! If the learned Heathen acknowledged the sublimity of that account which Moses gives of the Creation, what would he have said, if he had heard this account of the Son of Man coming in his Glory? Here, indeed, is no laboured pomp of words, no ornaments of language. This

would not have suited either the Speaker or the occasion. But what inexpressible dignity of thought! See him "coming in the clouds of heaven! And all the angels with him!" See him "sitting on the throne of his glory, and all the nations gathered before him!" And shall he separate them, placing the good on his right hand, and the wicked on his left? *Then shall the King say*—With what admirable propriety is the expression varied! *The Son of Man* comes down to judge the children of men! *The King* distributes rewards and punishments, to his obedient or rebellious subjects! "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

2. "Prepared for you from the foundation of the world." —But does this agree with the common supposition, That God created man merely to supply the vacant thrones of the rebel angels? Does it not rather seem to imply, That he would have created man, though the angels had never fallen? Inasmuch as he then prepared the kingdom for his human children, when he laid the foundation of the earth.

3. "Inherit the kingdom"—as being *heirs of God, and joint heirs* with his beloved Son. It is your right, seeing I have purchased *eternal redemption for all them that obey me.* And ye did obey me in the days of your flesh. Ye "believed in the Father, and also in me." Ye loved the Lord your God: and that love constrained you to love all mankind. Ye continued in the faith that wrought by love. Ye showed your faith by your works. "For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and in prison; and ye came unto me."

4. But in what sense are we to understand the words that follow? "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" They cannot be literally understood: they cannot answer in these very words: because it is not possible they should be ignorant, that God had really wrought by them. Is it not then mani-

fest, that these words are to be taken in a figurative sense And can they imply any more than that all which they have done will appear as nothing to them, will, as it were, vanish away, in view of what God their Saviour had done and suffered for them!

5. But "the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." What a declaration is this! Worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance! May the finger of the living God write it upon all our hearts!

I would take occasion from hence, first, to make a few Reflections on Good Works in general: Secondly, to consider in particular that Institution, for the promotion of which we are now assembled: and, in the third place, to make a short application.

I. 1. And first, I would make a few Reflections upon Good Works in general.

I am not insensible, that many, even serious people, are jealous of all that is spoken upon this subject: nay, and whenever the necessity of good works is strongly insisted on, take for granted, that he who speaks in this manner, is but one remove from Popery. But should we, for fear of this, or of any other reproach, refrain from speaking *the Truth as it is in Jesus?* Should we, on any consideration, *shun to declare the whole Counsel of* God? Nay, if a false prophet could utter that solemn word, how much more may the ministers of Christ, "We cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord, to speak either more or less!"

2. Is it not to be lamented, that any, who fear God, should desire us to do otherwise? And that by speaking otherwise themselves, they should occasion the Way of Truth to be evil spoken of? I mean, in particular, the way of salvation by faith, which on this very account is despised, nay, had in abomination by many sensible men. It is now above forty years since this grand scriptural doctrine, "By Grace ye are saved through Faith," began to be openly declared, by a few Clergymen of the Church of England. And not long after, some who heard, but did not

understand, attempted to preach the same doctrine, but miserably mangled it, wresting the Scripture, and "making void the law through faith."

3. Some of these, in order to exalt the value of faith, have utterly depreciated good works. They speak of them as not only not necessary to salvation, but as greatly obstructive to it. They represent them as abundantly more dangerous than evil ones, to those who are seeking to save their souls. One cries aloud, "More people go to hell by praying, than by thieving." Another screams out, "Away with your works! Have done with your works, or you cannot come to Christ!" And this unscriptural, irrational, heathenish declamation is called, *Preaching the Gospel!*

4. But "shall not the Judge of all the earth" speak, as well as "do right?" Will not "he be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged?" Assuredly he will. And upon his authority we must continue to declare, That whenever you do good to any for his sake; when you feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty; when you assist the stranger, or clothe the naked; when you visit them that are sick or in prison; these are not *splendid sins*, as one marvellously calls them; but "sacrifices, wherewith God is well pleased."

5. Not that our Lord intended, we should confine our beneficence to the bodies of men. He undoubtedly designed that we should be equally abundant in works of spiritual mercy. He died "to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of *all* good works:" zealous, above all, to "save souls from death," and thereby "hide a multitude of sins." And this is unquestionably included in St. Paul's exhortation, "As we have time, let us do good unto all men:" good in every possible kind, as well as in every possible degree. But why does not our blessed Lord mention works of spiritual mercy? He could not do it with any propriety: It was not for him to say, "I was in error, and ye convinced me; I was in sin, and ye brought me back to God." And it needed not; for in mentioning *some* he included *all* works of mercy.

6. But may I not add one thing more; (only he that heareth, let him understand;) good works are so far from being hindrances of our salvation; they are so far from being insignificant, from being of no account in Christianity, that, supposing them to spring from a right principle, they are the perfection of religion. They are the highest part of that spiritual Building, whereof Jesus Christ is the Foundation. To those, who attentively consider the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, it will be undeniably plain that what St. Paul there describes as the highest of all Christian graces, is properly and directly the love of our neighbour. And to him, who attentively considers the whole tenor both of the Old and New Testament, it will be equally plain, that works springing from this love are the highest part of the religion therein revealed. Of these our Lord himself says, "Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." Much *fruit!* Does not the very expression imply the excellency of what is so termed? Is not the tree itself for the sake of the fruit? By bearing fruit, and by this alone, it attains the highest perfection it is capable of, and answers the end for which it was planted. Who, what is he then, that is called a Christian, and can speak lightly of good works?

II. 1. From these general reflections, I proceed to consider that Institution in particular, for the Promotion of which we are now assembled. And in doing this, I shall, First, observe, The Rise of this Institution: Secondly, The Success; and, Thirdly, The Excellency of it: after which you will give me leave to make a short application.

I. On the first head, The Rise of this Institution, I may be very brief, as a great part of you know it already.

1. One would wonder, (as an ingenious Writer observes,) that such an institution as this, of so deep importance to mankind, should appear so late in the world. Have we any thing written upon the subject, earlier than the tract published at Rome, in the year 1637? And did not the proposal then sleep for many years? Were there any more than one or two attempts, and those not effectually pur-

sued, till the year 1700? By what steps it has been since revived and carried into execution, we are now to enquire.

2. I cannot give you a clearer view of this, than by presenting you with a short extract from the Introduction to the "Plan and Reports of the Society," published two years ago.

"Many and indubitable are the instances of the possibility of restoring to life persons apparently struck with sudden death, whether by an apoplexy, convulsive fits, noxious vapours, strangling, or drowning. Cases of this nature have occurred in every country. But they were considered and *neglected*, as extraordinary phenomena, from which no salutary consequence could be drawn.

3. "At length, a few benevolent gentlemen in Holland conjectured, that some, at least, might have been saved, had proper means been used in time: and formed themselves into a Society, in order to make a trial. Their attempts succeeded far beyond their expectations. Many were restored, who must otherwise have perished. And they were, at length, enabled to extend their plan over the Seven Provinces.

"Their success instigated other countries to follow their example. In the year 1768, the Magistrates of Health, at Milan and Venice, issued orders for the treatment of drowned persons. The city of Hamburgh appointed a similar ordinance to be read in all the Churches. In the year 1769, the Emperor of Germany published an Edict extending its directions and encouragements to every case that afforded a possibility of relief. In the year 1771, the Magistrates of Paris founded an institution in favour of the drowned.

4. "In the year 1773, Dr. Cogan translated the Memoirs of the Society at Amsterdam, in order to inform our countrymen of the practicability of recovering persons apparently drowned. And Mr. Hawes uniting with him, these gentlemen proposed a plan for a similar institution in these kingdoms. They were soon enabled to form a Society for this excellent purpose. The Plan is this:

"'I. The Society will publish, in the most extensive manner possible, the proper methods of treating persons in such circumstances.

"'II. They will distribute a premium of two guineas among the first persons, who attempt to recover any one taken out of the water as dead. And this reward will be given, even if the attempt be unsuccessful, provided it have been pursued two hours, according to the method laid down by the Society.

"'III. They will distribute a premium of four guineas, where the person is restored to life.

"'IV. They will give one guinea to any that admits the body into his house without delay, and furnishes the necessary accommodations.

"'V. A number of Medical Gentlemen, living near the places where these disasters commonly happen, will give their assistance gratis.'"

II. Such was the *Rise* of this admirable institution. With what success it has been attended, is the point which I purpose, in the next place, very briefly to consider.

And it must be allowed to be, not only far greater than those who despised it had imagined, but greater than the most sanguine expectations of the gentlemen, who were immediately engaged in it.

In the short space from its first establishment in May 1774, to the end of December, eight persons, seemingly dead, were restored to life.

In the year 1775, forty-seven were restored to life: thirty-two of them, by the direct encouragement and assistance of the gentlemen of this Society: and the rest, by Medical gentlemen and others, in consequence of their method of treatment being generally known.

In the year 1776, forty-one persons were restored to life, by the assistance of this Society. And eleven cases of those, who had been restored elsewhere, were communicated to them.

So the number of lives preserved and restored, in two years and a half, since their first institution, amounts to one hundred and seven! Add to these, those that have

been since restored, and out of two hundred and eighty-four persons, who were dead, to all appearance, no less than a hundred and fifty-seven have been restored to life! Such is the *success*, which has attended them in so short a time. Such a blessing has the gracious Providence of God given to this infant undertaking.

III. 1. It remains only to shew the *Excellency* of it. And this may appear from one single consideration. This institution unites together in one all the various acts of mercy. The several works of charity mentioned above, are all contained in this. It comprises all corporal, (if I may so speak,) and all spiritual benefits; all the instances of kindness, which can be shewn, either to the bodies or souls of men. To shew this beyond all contradiction, there needs no studied eloquence, no rhetorical colouring, but simply and nakedly to relate the thing as it is.

2. The thing attempted, and not only attempted, but actually performed, (so has the goodness of God prospered the labours of these lovers of mankind!) is no less, in a qualified sense, than restoring life to the dead! Is it any wonder then, that the generality of men should at first ridicule such an undertaking? That they should imagine the persons, who aimed at any such thing, must be utterly out of their senses? Indeed one of old said, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Cannot he, who bestowed life at first, just as well bestow it again? But it may well be thought a thing incredible, that *man* should raise the dead! For no human power can create life. And what human power can restore it? Accordingly, when our Lord, (whom the Jews at that time supposed to be a mere man,) came to the house of Jairus, in order to raise his daughter from the dead, upon the first intimation of his design, "they laughed him to scorn." "The maid, (said he,) is not dead, but sleepeth." "This is rather to be called sleep than death: seeing her life is not at an end: but I will quickly awaken her out of this sleep."

3. However, it is certain, she was really dead, and so

beyond all power but that of the Almighty. But see what power God has now given to man! To his name be all the praise! See with what wisdom he has endued these sons of mercy! Teaching them to stop the parting soul, to arrest the spirit just quitting the breathless clay, and taking wing for eternity! Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such things? Who hath read them in the annals of antiquity? Sons of men, *can these dry bones live?* Can this motionless heart beat again? Can this clotted blood flow any more? Can these dry, stiff vessels, open to give it passage? Can this cold flesh resume its native warmth, or these eyes again see the sun? Surely these are such things, (might one not almost say, such miracles?) as neither we of the present generation, nor our fathers had known!

4. Consider, I intreat you, how many miracles of mercy, (so to speak,) are contained in one! that poor man, who was lately numbered with the dead, by the care and pains of these messengers of God, again breathes the vital air, opens his eyes and stands upon his feet. He is restored to his rejoicing family, to his wife, to his (late) helpless children, that he may again, by his honest labour, provide them with all the necessaries of life. See now what ye have done, ye ministers of mercy. Behold the fruit of your labour of love! Ye have been a husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. And hereby ye have given meat to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked. For hungry, thirsty, and naked, these little ones must have been, had not you restored him that prevents it. You have more than relieved; you have prevented that sickness, which might naturally have arisen from their want of sufficient food to eat, or raiment to put on. You have hindered those orphans from wandering up and down, not having a place where to lay their head. Nay, and very possibly you have prevented some of them from being lodged in a dreary, comfortless prison.

5. So great, so comprehensive is the mercy, which you have shown to the bodies of your fellow creatures! But

why should their souls be left out of the account? How great are the benefits you have conferred on these also! The husband has now again an opportunity of assisting his wife, in things of the greatest moment. He may now again strengthen her hands in God, and help her to run with patience the race that is set before her. He may again join with her in instructing their children, and training them up in the way wherein they should go: who may live to be a comfort to their aged parents, and useful members of the community.

6. Nay, it may be, you have snatched the poor man himself, not only from the jaws of death, but from sinking lower than the waters, from the jaws of everlasting destruction. It cannot be doubted, but some of those whose lives you have restored, although they had been before without God in the world, will remember themselves, and not only with their lips, but in their lives, shew forth his praise. It is highly probable, some of these (as *one* out of the *ten lepers*,) "will return and give thanks to God," real, lasting thanks, by devoting themselves to his honourable service.

7. It is remarkable, that several of those, whom you have brought back from the margin of the grave, were intoxicated at the very time, when they dropped into the water. And at that very instant, (which is frequently the case, they totally lost their senses. Here therefore was no place for, no possibility of repentance. They had not time, they had not sense, so much as to cry out, "Lord, have mercy!" So they were sinking through the mighty waters, into the pit of destruction! And these instruments of divine mercy plucked them at once out of the water, and out of the fire! By the same act, delivered them from temporal and from eternal death!

8. Nay, one poor sinner (let it never be forgotten!) was just coming down from the ship, when (overtaken by the justice and mercy of God) her foot slipped and she fell into the river. Instantly her senses were lost, so that

she could not call upon God. Yet he had not forgotten her. He sent those, who delivered her from death; at least, from the death of the body. And who knows, but she may lay it to heart, and turn from the error of her ways? Who knows, but she may be saved from the second death, and, with her deliverers, *inherit the kingdom!*

9. One point more deserves to be particularly remarked. Many of those, who have been restored to life, (no less than eleven out of the fourteen, that were saved in a few months,) were in the number of those, that are a reproach to our nation, wilful self-murderers. As many of the desperate men, who attempt this horrid crime, are men who have had a liberal education, it is a pity but they would consider those fine words, not of a poor narrow-souled Christian, but of a generous Heathen, nay, a Roman! Let them calmly consider that beautiful passage:

"Proxima deinde tenent mœsti loca, qui sibi letum
Insontes peperere manu, lucemque perosi
Projecere animas. Quam vellent æthere in alto
Nunc et pauperiem, et duros perferre labores!
Fata obstant, tristique palus innabilis unda
Alligat, et novies Styx interfusa coercet.*"

"Fata obstant!" But in favour of many, we see God has over-ruled fate. They are brought back over the unnavigable river. They do behold the upper skies. They see the light of the sun. O let them see the light of thy countenance! And let them so live their few remaining days on earth, that they may live with thee for ever!

* "Then crowds succeed, who, prodigal of breath,
Themselves anticipate the doom of death;
Though free from guilt, they cast their lives away,
And sad and sullen hate the golden day.
O with what joy the wretches now would bear
Pain, toil, and woe, to breathe the vital air!
In vain! By fate for ever are they bound
With dire Avernus, and the Lake profound,
And Styx, with nine wide channels, roars around!"

Mr. PITT's Virgil.

IV. 1. Permit me now to make a short Application. But to whom shall I direct this? Are there any here who are unhappily prejudiced against that Revelation, which breathes nothing but benevolence? Which contains the richest display of God's love to man that ever was made from the foundation of the world? Yet even to *you* I would address a few words; for if you are not Christians, you are men. You too are susceptible of kind impressions: you have the feelings of humanity. Has not your heart too glowed at that noble sentiment, (worthy the heart and lips of the highest Christian,)

"Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto!"

Have not you also sympathized with the afflicted? How many times have you been pained at human misery? When you have beheld a scene of deep distress, has not your soul melted within you?

"And now and then a sigh you stole,
And tears began to flow."

But is it easy for any one to conceive a scene of deeper distress than this? Suppose you are standing by, just when the messenger comes in, and the message is delivered. "I am sorry to tell you, but you must know it, Your husband is no more. He was making haste out of the vessel, and his foot slipped. It is true, after a time, his body was found. But there it lies, without any signs of life." In what a condition are now both the mother and the children! Perhaps, for awhile, stupid, overwhelmed, silent; staring at each other; then bursting out into a loud and bitter lamentation! Now is the time to help them; by assisting those who make it their business so to do. Now let nothing hinder you from improving the glorious opportunity. Restore the husband to his disconsolate wife, the father to his weeping children! It is true, you cannot do this in person: you cannot be upon the spot. But you may do it in an effectual manner, by assisting those that are. You may now, by your generous contribution, *send* them the help which you cannot personally give. O shut not up

your bowels of compassion towards them. Now open your hearts and your hands. If you have much, give plenteously. If not, give a little, with a willing mind.

2. To you, who believe the Christian Revelation, I may speak in a still stronger manner. You believe, your blessed Master "left you an example that you might tread in his steps." Now you know, his whole life was one labour of love. You know "how he went about doing good," and that without intermission, declaring to all, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Is not that, then, the language of your heart,

"Thy mind throughout my life be shewn,
While list'ning to the wretches' cry,
The widows' and the orphans' groan,
On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and helpless to relieve:
My life, my all, for them to give."

Occasions of doing this can never be wanting; for "the poor ye have always with you." But what a peculiar opportunity does the solemnity of this day furnish you with, of "treading in his steps," after a manner which you did not before conceive? Did he say to the poor afflicted parent, (doubtless to the surprise of many,) *Weep not?* And did he surprise them still more, when he stopped her flowing tears, by restoring life to her dead son, and *delivering him to his mother?* Did he (notwithstanding all that *laughed him to scorn*) restore to life the daughter of Jairus? How many things of a nearly resembling sort, "if human we may liken to divine," have been done, and continue to be done daily, by these lovers of mankind? Let every one then be ambitious of having a share in this glorious work! Let every man, (in a stronger sense than Mr. Herbert meant,)

"Join hands with God, to make a poor man live."

By your generous assistance, be ye partakers of their work, and partakers of their joy.

3. To you I need add but one word more. Remember

(what was spoken at first) the solemn declaration of him, whose ye are, and whom ye serve, coming in the clouds of heaven! While you are promoting this comprehensive charity, which contains feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, lodging the stranger, indeed all good works in one, let those animating words be written on your hearts, and sounding in your ears, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it to ME."

SERMON CV.

ON PLEASING ALL MEN.

ROMANS XV. 2.

"*Let every Man please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification.*"

1. UNDOUBTEDLY the duty here prescribed is incumbent on all mankind: at least on every one of those, to whom are entrusted the Oracles of God. For it is here enjoined to every one without exception, that names the Name of Christ. And the person whom every one is commanded to please is *his Neighbour*, that is, every child of man. Only we are to remember here, what the same Apostle speaks upon a similar occasion, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." In like manner we are to please all men, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us: but, strictly speaking, it is not possible; it is what no man ever did, nor ever will perform. But suppose we use our utmost diligence; be the event as it may, we fulfil our duty.

2. We may farther observe, in how admirable a manner the Apostle limits this direction; otherwise, were it pursued without any limitation, it might produce the most mischievous consequences. We are directed to please them *for their good:* not barely for the sake of pleasing them, or pleasing ourselves: much less of pleasing them to their

hurt, which is so frequently done: indeed continually done, by those who do not love their neighbour as themselves. Nor is it only their temporal good, which we are to aim at in pleasing our neighbour; but what is of infinitely greater consequence; we are to do it *for their edification*. In such a manner as may conduce to their spiritual and eternal good. We are so to please them, that the pleasure may not perish in the using, but may redound to their lasting advantage: may make them wiser and better, holier and happier, both in time and in eternity.

3. Many are the treatises and discourses which have been published on this important subject. But all of them that I have either seen or heard were miserably defective. Hardly one of them proposed the right end: one and all had some lower design in pleasing men, than to save their souls, to build them up in love and holiness. Of consequence, they were not likely to propose the right means, for the attainment of that end. One celebrated tract of this kind, entitled—*The Courtier*, was published in Spain, about two hundred years ago, and translated into various languages. But it has nothing to do with edification, and is therefore quite wide of the mark. Another treatise, entitled, *The Complete Courtier*, was published in our own country, in the reign of King Charles the Second, and (as it seems) by a retainer to his court: in this there are several very sensible advices, concerning our outward behaviour: and many little improprieties in word or action are observed, whereby men displease others without intending it: but this Author, likewise, has no view at all to the spiritual or eternal good of his neighbour. Seventy or eighty years ago, another book was printed in London, entitled, *The Art of Pleasing*. But as it was written in a languid manner, and contained only common, trite observations, it was not likely to be of use to men of understanding, and still less to men of piety.

4. But it may be asked, Has not the subject been since treated of by a writer of very different character? Is it not exhausted, by one who was a consummate master of

the Art of Pleasing? And who, writing to one he tenderly loved, to a favourite son, gives him all the advices which his great understanding, improved by various learning, and the experience of many years, and much converse with all sorts of men, could suggest? I mean, the late Lord Chesterfield, the general darling of all the Irish, as well as of the English nation.

5. The means of pleasing, which this wise and indulgent parent continually and earnestly recommends to his darling child, and on which he, doubtless, formed both his tempers and outward conduct,

"Till death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue,"

were, first, *Making love*, in the grossest sense, to all the married women, whom he conveniently could. (Single women he advises him to refrain from, for fear of disagreeable consequences.) Secondly, Constant and careful *dissimulation*, always wearing a mask: trusting no man upon earth, so as to let him know his real thoughts, but perpetually seeming to mean what he did not mean, and seeming to be what he was not. Thirdly, Well-devised *lying* to all sorts of people, speaking what was farthest from his heart: and, in particular, *flattering* men, women, and children, as the infallible way of pleasing them.

It needs no great art to shew that this is not the way to please our neighbour *for his good*, or *to edification*. I shall endeavour to shew, that there is a better way of doing it: and indeed a way diametrically opposite to this. It consists,

I. In removing Hindrances out of the way; and,
II. In using the Means that directly tend to this end.

I. 1. I advise all that desire to "please their neighbour for his good to edification," first, To remove all Hindrances out of the way; or, in other words, to avoid every thing which tends to displease wise and good men, men of sound understanding and real piety. Now cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, and revenge, are displeasing to all wise and good men, to all who are endued with a sound understanding

and genuine piety. There is likewise another temper, nearly related to these, only in a lower kind, and which is usually found in common life, wherewith men in general are not pleased. We commonly call it *ill-nature*. With all possible care avoid all these: nay, and whatever bears any resemblance to them: as sourness, sternness, sullenness, on the one hand; peevishness and fretfulness on the other: if ever you hope to "please your neighbour for his good to edification."

2. Next to cruelty, malice and similar tempers, with the words and actions that naturally spring therefrom, nothing is more disgustful, not only to persons of sense and religion, but even to the generality of men, than *pride*, *haughtiness* of spirit, *assuming*, *arrogant*, *overbearing* behaviour. Even uncommon learning joined with shining talents, will not make amends for this: but a man of eminent endowments, if he be eminently haughty, will be despised by many, and disliked by all. Of this the famous Master of Trinity College in Cambridge, was a remarkable instance. How few persons of his time had a stronger understanding or deeper learning than Dr. Bentley! And yet how few were less beloved! Unless one who was little, if at all inferior to him in sense or learning, and equally distant from humility, the Author of the Divine Legation of Moses. Whoever, therefore, desires to please his neighbour for his good, must take care of splitting upon this rock. Otherwise the same pride which impels him to seek the esteem of his neighbour, will infallibly hinder his attaining it.

3. Almost as disgustful to the generality of men as *haughtiness* itself, is a *passionate* temper and behaviour. Men of a tender disposition are afraid even to converse with persons of this spirit. And others are not fond of their acquaintance, as frequently, (perhaps when they expected nothing less,) meeting with shocks, which if they bear for the present, yet they do not willingly put themselves in the way of meeting with again. Hence passionate men have seldom many friends; at least, not for any length of

time. Crowds, indeed, may attend them for a season, especially when it may promote their interest. But they are usually disgusted one after another, and fall off like leaves in Autumn. If, therefore, you desire lastingly to please your neighbour for his good, by all possible means, avoid violent passion.

4. Yea, and if you desire to please, even on this account, take that advice of the Apostle, "Put away all lying." It is the remark of an ingenious Author, that of all vices, *lying* never yet found an apologist, any that would openly plead in its favour, whatever his private sentiments might be. But it should be remembered, Mr. Addison went to a better world, before Lord Chesterfield's Letters were published. Perhaps his apology for it was the best that ever was, or can be made for so bad a cause. But after all, the labour he has bestowed upon it "has only semblance of worth; not substance." It has no solidity in it; it is nothing better than a shining phantom. And as lying can never be commendable or innocent, so neither can it be pleasing: at least when it is stripped of its disguise, and appears in its own shape. Consequently it ought to be carefully avoided, by all those who wish to please their neighbour for his good to edification.

5. But is not *flattery*, a man may say, one species of lying? And has not this been allowed in all ages, to be the sure mean of pleasing? Has not that observation been confirmed by numberless experiments,

"*Obsequium amicos, veritas odium parit?*"

"Flattery creates friends, plain-dealing enemies."

Has not a late witty writer, in his "Sentimental Journal," related some striking instances of this? I answer, It is true. Flattery is pleasing for awhile, and that not only to weak minds: as the desire of praise, whether deserved or undeserved, is planted in every child of man. But it is only for awhile. As soon as the mask drops off, as soon as it appears that the speaker meant nothing by his soft words, we are pleased no longer. Every man's own experience teaches him this. And we all know, that if a man continue

to flatter, after his insincerity is discovered, it is disgustful, not agreeable. Therefore, even this fashionable way of lying is to be avoided, by all that are desirous of pleasing their neighbour, to any lasting advantage.

6. Nay, whoever desires to do this, must remember that not only *lying*, in every species of it, but even *dissimulation*, (which is not the same with lying, though nearly related to it,) is displeasing to men of understanding, though they have not religion. Terence represents even an old Heathen, when it was imputed to him, as answering with indignation, "*Simulare non est meum:*" "Dissimulation is no part of my character." Guile, subtilty, cunning, the whole art of deceiving, by whatever terms it is expressed, is not accounted an accomplishment by wise men; but is, indeed, an abomination to them. And even those who practise it most, who are the greatest artificers of fraud, are not pleased with it in other men, neither are fond of conversing with those that practise it on themselves. Yea, the greatest deceivers are greatly displeased at those that play their own arts back upon them.

11. Now if cruelty, malice, envy, hatred, revenge, ill-nature; if pride and haughtiness; if irrational ager; if lying and dissimulation, together with guile, subtilty, and cunning, are all and every one displeasing to all men, especially to wise and good men, we may easily gather from hence, what is the surest way to please them for their good to edification. Only we are to remember, that there are those in every time and place, whom we must not expect to please. We must not, therefore, be surprised, when we meet with men, who are not to be pleased any way. It is now as it was of old, when our Lord himself complained, "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and saying to each other, We have piped unto you, but ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, but ye have not wept." But leaving these froward ones to themselves, we may reasonably hope to please others, by a careful and steady observation of the few directions following.

1. First, Let *love* not visit you as a transient guest, but be the constant temper of your soul. See that your heart be filled at all times and on all occasions, with real, undissembled benevolence, not to those only that love *you*, but to every soul of man. Let it pant in your heart, let it sparkle in your eyes, let it shine on all your actions. Whenever you open your lips, let it be with love, and let there be in your tongue the law of kindness. Your word will then distill as the rain, and as the dew upon the tender herb. Be not straitened or limited in your affection, but let it embrace every child of man. Every one that is born of a woman has a claim to your good-will. You owe this not to some, but to all. And let all men know, that you desire both their temporal and eternal happiness as sincerely as you do your own.

2. Secondly, If you would please your neighbour for his good, study to be *lowly* in heart. Be little and vile in your own eyes, in honour preferring others before yourself. Be deeply sensible of your own weaknesses, follies, and imperfections; as well as of the sin remaining in your heart, and cleaving to all your words and actions. And let this spirit appear in all you speak or do: "Be clothed with humility." Reject with horror that favourite maxim of the old Heathen, sprung from the bottomless pit, *Tanti eris aliis, quanti tibi fueris:* "The more you value yourself, the more others will value you." Not so: on the contrary, both God and man "resist the proud:" and as "God giveth grace to the humble," so humility, not pride, recommends us to the esteem and favour of men, especially those that fear God.

3. If you desire to please your neighbour for his good to edification, you should, Thirdly, labour and pray, that you may be *meek*, as well as lowly in heart. Labour to be of a calm, dispassionate temper, *gentle* towards all men. And let the gentleness of your disposition appear in the whole tenor of your conversation. Let all your words and all your actions be regulated thereby. Remember, likewise, that advice of St. Peter: As an addition to your gentleness,

"be merciful; be courteous; be pitiful;" be tenderly compassionate to all that are in distress, to all that are under any affliction of mind, body, or estate. Let

"The various scenes of human woe
Excite your softest sympathy."

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs: and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them effectual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are the immediate objects of your compassion; but to others, likewise, that "see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

4. And while you are pitiful to the afflicted, see that you are *courteous* toward all men. It matters not, in this respect, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, superior or inferior to you. No, nor even whether good or bad, whether they fear God or not. Indeed the *mode* of shewing your courtesy may vary, as Christian prudence will direct. But the thing itself is due to all: the lowest and worst have a claim to our courtesy. It may either be inward or outward: either a temper or a mode of behaviour. Such a mode of behaviour as naturally springs from courtesy of heart. Is this the same with good breeding or politeness? (which seems to be only a high degree of good breeding:) Nay, good breeding is chiefly the fruit of education; but education cannot give courtesy of heart. Mr. Addison's well known definition of politeness seems rather to be a definition of this, "A constant desire of pleasing all men, appearing through the whole conversation." Now this may subsist, even in a high degree, where there has been no advantage of education. I have seen as real courtesy in an Irish cabin, as could be found in St. James's or the Louvre.

5. Shall we endeavour to go a little deeper, to search the foundation of this matter? What is the source of that desire to please, which we term courtesy? Let us look attentively into our hearts, and we shall soon find an answer. The same Apostle that teaches us to *be courteous*, teaches us to *honour all men*. And his Master teaches me to love all men. Join these together, and what will be the effect? A poor wretch cries to me for an alms: I look and see him covered with dirt and rags. But through these I see one that has an immortal spirit, made to know, and love, and dwell with God to eternity: I honour him for his Creator's sake. I see, through all these rags, that he is purpled over with the blood of Christ. I love him for the sake of his Redeemer. The courtesy, therefore, which I feel and shew toward him, is a mixture of the honour and love which I bear to the offspring of God, the purchase of his Son's blood, and the candidate for immortality. This courtesy let us feel and shew toward all men; and we shall please all men to their edification.

6. Once more. Take all opportunities of *declaring* to others the *affection* which you really feel for them. This may be done with such an air, and in such a manner, as is not liable to the imputation of flattery. And experience shews, that honest men are pleased by this, full as much as knaves are by flattery. Those who are persuaded that your expressions of good-will toward them are the language of your heart, will be as well satisfied with them, as with the strongest encomiums which you could pass upon them. You may judge them by yourselves, by what you feel in your own breast. You like to be honoured: but had you not rather be beloved?

7. Permit me to add one advice more. If you would please all men for their good, at all events *speak* to all men the very *truth* from your heart. When you speak, open the window of your breast: let your words be the very picture of your heart. In all companies and on all occasions, be a man of *veracity*, nay, be not content with bare veracity;

but "in simplicity and godly sincerity, have all your conversation in the world," as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

8. To sum up all in one word, If you would please men, please God! Let truth and love possess your whole soul. Let them be the springs of all your affections, passions, tempers; the rule of all your thoughts. Let them inspire all your discourse; continually seasoned with that salt, and "meet to minister grace to the hearers." Let all your actions be wrought in love. Never "let mercy nor truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck." Let them be open and conspicuous to all: and "write them on the table of thy heart." "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

SERMON CVI.

THE DUTY OF CONSTANT COMMUNION.*

LUKE XXII. 19.

"*Do this in Remembrance of* ME."

IT is no wonder that men who have no fear of God, should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls: and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of *eating and drinking unworthily*, that they never think how much greater the danger is, when they do not eat or drink it at all. That I may do what I can to bring these well-meaning men to a more just way of thinking, I shall,

I. Shew that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can; and,

II. Answer some Objections.

I. I am to shew, that it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can.

* The following Discourse was written above five and fifty years ago, for the use of my Pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments, in any point which is therein delivered.

1788. J. W.

1. The first reason why it is the duty of every Christian so to do, is because it is a plain command of Christ. That this is his command, appears from the words of the text, "Do this in remembrance of me:" by which, as the Apostles were obliged to bless, break, and give bread to all that joined with them in these holy things, so were all Christians obliged to receive those signs of Christ's body and blood. Here, therefore, the bread and wine are commanded to be received, in remembrance of his death, to the end of the world. Observe too, that this command was given by our Lord, when he was just laying down his life for our sakes. They are, therefore, as it were, his dying words, to all his followers.

2. A second reason why every Christian should do this, as often as he can, is because the benefits of doing it are so great, to all that do it in faith and in obedience to him: viz. the forgiveness of our past sins, the present strengthening and refreshing of our souls. In this world we are never free from temptations. Whatever way of life we are in, whatever our condition be, whether we are sick or well, in trouble or at ease, the enemies of our souls are watching to lead us into sin. And too often they prevail over us. Now, when we are convinced of having sinned against God, what surer way have we of procuring pardon from him, than the *shewing forth the Lord's death*, and beseeching him, for the sake of his Son's sufferings, to blot out all our sins?

3. The grace of God given herein, confirms to us the pardon of our sins, and enables us to leave them. As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and the blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: this gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection. If, therefore, we have any regard for the plain command of Christ, if we desire the pardon of our sins, if we wish for strength to believe, to love and obey God, then we should neglect no opportunity of receiving the Lord's Supper. Then we must never turn our backs on the feast which our Lord has pre-

pared for us. We must neglect no occasion, which the good Providence of God affords us, for this purpose. This is the true rule; so often are we to receive as God gives us opportunity. Whoever, therefore, does not receive, but goes from the holy table, when all things are prepared, either does not understand his duty, or does not care for the dying command of his Saviour, the forgiveness of his sins, the strengthening of his soul, and the refreshing it with the hope of glory.

4. Let every one, therefore, who has either any desire to please God, or any love for his own soul, obey God, and consult the good of his own soul, by communicating every time he can: like the first Christians with whom the Christian Sacrifice was a constant part of the service of the Lord's-day. And for several centuries they received it almost every day. Four times a week always, and every saint's day beside. Accordingly those that joined in the prayers of the faithful, never failed to partake of the blessed sacrament. What opinion they had of any who turned his back upon it, we may learn from that ancient Canon, "If any believer join in the prayers of the faithful, and go away without receiving the Lord's Supper, let him be excommunicated, as bringing confusion into the Church of God."

5. In order to understand the nature of the Lord's Supper, it would be useful carefully to read over those passages in the Gospel, and in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, which speak of the institution of it. Hence we learn that the design of this sacrament is the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.

6. It is highly expedient for those who purpose to receive this, whenever their time will permit, to prepare themselves for this solemn ordinance, by self-examination and prayer. But this is not absolutely necessary. And when we have not time for it, we should see that we have the habitual preparation which is absolutely necessary, and can never be

dispensed with on any account, or any occasion whatever. This is, first, a full *purpose* of heart, to keep all the commandments of God. And, secondly, A sincere *desire* to receive all his promises.

II. I am, in the second place, to answer the common Objections against constantly receiving the Lord's Supper.

1. I say, *Constantly* receiving. For as to the phrase of *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means any thing else than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. For if we are not obliged to communicate *constantly*, by what argument can it be proved, that we are obliged to communicate *frequently?* Yea, more than once a year, or once in seven years? or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it *constantly*, or proves nothing at all. Therefore, that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking, ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding.

2. In order to prove that it is our duty to communicate constantly, we may observe that the holy communion is to be considered either, 1, As a Command of God, or, 2, As a Mercy to man.

First, as a Command of God. God our Mediator and Governor, from whom we have received our life and all things, on whose will it depends, whether we shall be perfectly happy or perfectly miserable from this moment to eternity, declares to us, that all who obey his commands, shall be eternally happy; all who do not shall be eternally miserable. Now one of these commands is, "*Do this in Remembrance of* ME." I ask then, Why do you not do this, when you can do it if you will? When you have an opportunity before you, why do not you obey the command of God?

3. Perhaps you will say, "God does not command me to do this *as often as I can:*" that is, the words "as often as you can," are not added in this particular place. What then? Are we not to obey every command of God, as often as we can? Are not all the promises of God made

to those, and those only, who *give all diligence;* that is, to those who do all they can to obey his commandments? Our power is the one rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey it if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven.

4. And this great truth, that we are obliged to keep every command as far as we can, is clearly proved from the absurdity of the contrary opinion: for were we to allow that we are not obliged to obey every commandment of God as often as we can, we have no argument left to prove that any man is bound to obey any command at any time. For instance. Should I ask a man, Why he does not obey one of the plainest commands of God? Why, for instance, he does not help his parents? He might answer, "I will not do it now; but I will at another time." When that time comes, put him in mind of God's command again: and he will say, "I will obey it some time or other." Nor is it possible ever to prove, that he ought to do it now, unless by proving that he ought to do it as often as he can; and therefore he ought to do it now, because he can if he will.

5. Consider the Lord's Supper, Secondly, as a Mercy from God to Man. As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself, namely, by being like him in holiness: as he knew we could do nothing towards this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end, that through this mean we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven.

I ask then, Why do you not accept of his mercy as often as ever you can? God now offers you his blessing: why do you refuse it? You have now an opportunity of receiving his mercy: why do you not receive it? You are weak:

why do not you seize every opportunity of increasing your strength? In a word, considering this as a command of God, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no piety: considering it as a mercy, he that does not communicate as often as he can, has no wisdom.

6. These two considerations will yield a full answer to all the common objections which have been made against constant communion: indeed to all that ever were or can be made. In truth, nothing can be objected against it, but upon supposition, that this particular time, either the communion will be no mercy, or I am not commanded to receive it. Nay, should we grant it would be no mercy, that is not enough: for still the other reason would hold: whether it does you any good or none, you are to obey the command of God.

7. However, let us see the particular excuses which men commonly make for not obeying it. The most common is, "I am *unworthy*; and *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*. Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation."

The case is this. God offers you one of the greatest mercies on this side heaven, and commands you to accept it. Why do not you accept this mercy, in obedience to his command? You say, "I am unworthy to receive it." And what then? You are unworthy to receive any mercy from God. But is that a reason for refusing all mercy? God offers you a pardon for all your sins. You are unworthy of it, it is sure, and he knows it: but since he is pleased to offer it nevertheless, will not you accept of it? He offers to deliver your soul from death. You are unworthy to live. But will you therefore refuse life? He offers to endue your soul with new strength: because you are unworthy of it, will you deny to take it? What can God himself do for us farther, if we refuse his mercy, because we are unworthy of it?

8. But suppose this were no mercy to us, (to suppose which is indeed giving God the lie; saying, That is not

good for man, which he purposely ordered for his good:) still I ask, Why do not you obey God's command? He says, "Do this." Why do you not? You answer, "I am unworthy to do it." What! Unworthy to obey God? Unworthy to do what God bids you do? Unworthy to obey God's command? What do you mean by this? That those who are unworthy to obey God, ought not to obey him? Who told you so? If he were even "an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." If you think God himself has told you by St. Paul, let us hear his words. They are these, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

Why this is quite another thing. Here is not a word said of *being unworthy* to eat and drink. Indeed he does speak of eating and drinking *unworthily*: but that is quite a different thing: so he has told us himself. In this very chapter we are told that by eating and drinking unworthily is meant, Taking the holy sacrament in such a rude and disorderly way, that one was *hungry, and another drunken.* But what is that to *you?* Is there any danger of *your* doing so? Of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily?* However unworthy you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus. Therefore whatever the punishment is of doing it thus unworthily, it does not concern *you.* You have no more reason from this text to disobey God, than if there was no such text in the Bible. If you speak of "eating and drinking unworthily" in the sense St. Paul uses the words, you may as well say, "I dare not communicate *for fear the Church should fall,*" as for fear I should *eat and drink unworthily.*

9. If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not, for eating and drinking unworthily; for that in St. Paul's sense, ye cannot do. But I will tell you for what you shall fear damnation: for not eating and drinking at all: for not obeying your Maker and Redeemer: for disobeying his plain command: for thus setting at nought both his mercy and authority. Fear ye this: For hear what his Apostle saith, "Whoso-

ever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all," James ii. 10.

10. We see then how weak the objection is, "I dare not receive,* because I am unworthy." Nor is it any stronger, though the reason why you think yourself unworthy is, that you have lately fallen into sin. It is true, our Church forbids those "who have done any grievous crime," to receive it without repentance. But all that follows from this is, That we should repent before we come; not that we should neglect to come at all.

To say therefore, that "a man may turn his back upon the Altar, because he has lately fallen into sin: that he may impose this penance upon himself," is talking without any warrant from Scripture. For where does the Bible teach, to atone for breaking one commandment of God, by breaking another? What advice is this, "commit a new act of disobedience, and God will more easily forgive the past!"

11. Others there are, who to excuse their disobedience, plead, that they are unworthy in another sense: that they "cannot live up to it: they cannot pretend to lead so holy a life, as constantly communicating would oblige them to do." Put this into plain words. I ask, why do not you accept the mercy which God commands you to accept? You answer, "Because I cannot live up to the profession I must make when I receive it." Then it is plain you ought never to receive it all. For it is no more lawful to promise once what you know you cannot perform, than to promise it a thousand times. You know too, that it is one and the same promise, whether you make it every year or every day. You promise to do just as much, whether you promise ever so often or ever so seldom.

If therefore you cannot live up to the profession they make who communicate once a week, neither can you come up to the profession they make, who communicate once a year. But cannot you indeed? Then it had been good

* The Lord's Supper.

for you that you had never been born. For all that you profess at the Lord's-table, you must both profess and keep, or you cannot be saved. For you profess nothing there but this, That you will diligently keep his commandments. And cannot you keep up to this profession? Then you cannot enter into life.

12. Think then what you say, before you say, "You cannot live up to what is required of constant communicants." This is no more than is required of any communicants, yea, of every one that has a soul to be saved. So that to say, "You cannot live up to this," is neither better nor worse than renouncing Christianity. It is, in effect, renouncing your baptism, wherein you solemnly promised to keep all his commandments. You now fly from that profession. You wilfully break one of his commandments, and then to excuse yourself, say you cannot keep his commandments! Then you cannot expect to receive the promises, which are made only to those that keep them.

13. What has been said on this pretence against constant communion, is applicable to those who say the same thing in other words, "We dare not do it because it requires so perfect an obedience afterwards, as we cannot promise to perform." Nay, it requires neither more nor less perfect obedience, than you promised in your baptism. You then undertook to keep the commandments of God by his help: and you promise no more when you communicate.

14. A second objection which is often made against constant communion, is the having so much business, as will not allow time for such a preparation as is necessary thereto. I answer, All the preparation that is absolutely necessary, is contained in those words, "Repent you truly of your sins past; have faith in Christ our Saviour." (And observe, that word is not taken in its highest sense,) "Amend your lives, and be in charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of these holy mysteries." All who are thus prepared, may draw near without fear, and receive the sacrament to their comfort. Now what business can hinder you from being thus prepared? From repenting

of your past sins? From believing that Christ died to save sinners? From mending your lives, and being in charity with all men? No business can hinder you from this, unless it be such as hinders you from being in a state of salvation. If you resolve and design to follow Christ, you are fit to approach the Lord's-table. If you do not design this, you are only fit for the table and company of devils.

15. No business, therefore, can hinder any man from having that preparation which alone is necessary, unless it be such as unprepares him for heaven, as puts him out of a state of salvation. Indeed every prudent man will, when he has time, examine himself, before he receives the Lord's-Supper. Whether he repent him truly of his former sins, whether he believe the promises of God, whether he fully design to walk in his ways, and be in charity with all men? In this, and in private prayer, he will doubtless spend all the time he conveniently can. But what is this to you who have not time? What excuse is this, for not obeying God? He commands you to come, and prepare yourself by prayer, if you have time; if you have not, however come. Make not reverence to God's command, a pretence for breaking it. Do not rebel against him, for fear of offending him. Whatever you do, or leave undone besides, be sure to do what God bids you do. Examining yourself, and using private prayer, especially before the Lord's-Supper, is good. But, behold! *To obey is better than* self-examination, *and to hearken*, than the prayer of an angel.

16. A third objection against constant communion is, That it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did? What then? Will you thence conclude, that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you, "Do this." You may do it now, but will not: and to excuse yourself say, "If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now." Suppose it did: has God ever told you, That when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless: if not, what you say is

just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either shew that the Lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.

17. Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts; either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for any thing they are not used to: or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord's-Supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it.

18. A fourth objection is, "I have communicated constantly so long; but I have not found the benefit I expected." This has been the case with many well-meaning persons, and therefore deserves to be particularly considered. And consider this first. Whatever God commands us to do, we are to do, because he commands, whether we feel any benefit thereby or not. Now God commands, "Do this in remembrance of me." This, therefore, we are to do, because he commands, whether we find present benefit thereby or not. But undoubtedly we shall find benefit sooner or later, though perhaps insensibly. We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least, we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations: and surely this should be enough to make us receive this food as often as we can: though we do not presently feel the happy effects of it, as some have done, and we ourselves may, when God sees best.

19. But supposing a man has often been at the sacrament, and yet received no benefit. Was it not his own fault? Either he was not rightly prepared, willing to obey all the commands, and to receive all the promises of God: or he did not receive it aright, trusting in God. Only see that you are duly prepared for it, and the oftener you come to the Lord's-table, the greater benefit you will find there.

20. A fifth objection which some have made against con-

stant communion is, That "the Church enjoins it only three times a year." The words of the Church are; "Note that every Parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year." To this I answer, first, What if the Church had not enjoined it at all, is it not enough that God enjoins it? We obey the Church only for God's sake. And shall we not obey God himself? If then, you receive three times a year, because the Church commands it, receive every time you can, because God commands it. Else your doing the one will be so far from excusing you for not doing the other, that your own practice will prove your folly and sin, and leave you without excuse.

But, Secondly, We cannot conclude from these words that the Church excuses him who receives only thrice a year. The plain sense of them is, That he who does not receive thrice at least, shall be cast out of the Church: but they by no means excuse him, who communicates no oftener. This never was the judgment of our Church: on the contrary, she takes all possible care, that the sacrament be duly administered, wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year.

The Church gives a particular direction with regard to those that are in holy Orders. "In all Cathedral and Collegiate Churches and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the communion with the Priest, every Sunday at the least."

21. It has been shewn, first, That if we consider the Lord's-Supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to Christian piety, who does not receive it, (not once a month, but) as often as he can: Secondly, That if we consider the institution of it, as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can, has any pretence to Christian prudence: Thirdly, that none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man, who does not at every opportunity obey this command and accept this mercy.

22. It has been particularly shewn, secondly, That unworthiness is no excuse: because though in one sense we are all

unworthy, yet none of us need be afraid of being unworthy in St. Paul's sense of "eating and drinking unworthily:" Secondly, That the not having time enough for preparation, can be no excuse: since the only preparation which is absolutely necessary, is that which no business can hinder; nor indeed any thing on earth, unless so far as it hinders our being in a state of salvation: Thirdly, That its abating our reverence is no excuse: since he who gave the command, "Do this," no where adds, "Unless it abates your reverence;" Fourthly, That our not profiting by it is no excuse, since it is our own fault, in neglecting that necessary preparation, which is in our own power. Lastly, That the judgment of our own Church is quite in favour of constant communion. If those who have hitherto neglected it on any of these pretences, will lay these things to heart, they will, by the grace of God, come to a better mind, and never more forsake their own mercies.

SERMON CVII.

OF FORMER TIMES.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 10.

"*Say not thou, What is the Cause, that the former Days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*"

1. IT is not easy to discern any connexion between this text and the context: between these words and either those that go before, or those that follow after. It seems to be a detached, independent sentence, like very many in the *Proverbs* of *Solomon*. And like them, it contains a weighty truth, which deserves a serious consideration. Is not the purport of the question this? It is not wise to enquire into the cause of a supposition, unless the supposition itself be not only true, but clearly proved so to be. Therefore it is not wise to enquire into the cause of this supposition, That *the former days were better than these*; because, common as it is, it was never yet proved, nor indeed ever can be.

2. Perhaps there are few suppositions which have passed more currently in the world than this, That the former days were better than these; and that in several respects. It is generally supposed, that we now live in the dregs of time, when the world is, as it were, grown old, and, consequently, that every thing in it is in a declining state. It

is supposed, in particular, that men were some ages ago, of a far taller stature than now: that they likewise had far greater abilities, and enjoyed a deeper and stronger understanding: in consequence of which their writings of every kind are far preferable to those of later times. Above all, it is supposed, that the former generations of men excelled the present in virtue: that mankind in every age, and in every nation, have degenerated more and more; so that, at length, they have fallen from the golden into the iron age, and now justice is fled from the earth.

3. Before we consider the truth of these suppositions, let us enquire into the rise of them. And as to the general supposition, That the world was once in a far more excellent state than it is, may we not easily believe, that this arose, (as did all the fabulous accounts of the golden age,) from some confused traditions concerning our first parents and their paradisiacal state? To this refer many of the fragments of ancient writings, which men of learning have gleaned up. Therefore we may allow, that there is some truth in the supposition: seeing it is certain, the days which Adam and Eve spent in Paradise, were far better than any, which have been spent by their descendants, or ever will be, till Christ returns to reign upon earth.

4. But whence could that supposition arise, That men were formerly of a larger stature than they are now? This has been a generally prevailing opinion almost in all nations and in all ages. Hence, nearly two thousand years ago, the well-known line of Virgil,

Qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus.

Hence, nearly a thousand years before him, Homer tells us of one of his heroes throwing a stone, which hardly ten men could lift, Οἷοι νυν βροτοι, *Such as men are now.* We allow, indeed, there have been giants in all ages, in various parts of the world. Whether the Antediluvians mentioned in Genesis were such or not, (which many have questioned,) we cannot doubt but Og the King of Basan was such, as well as Goliath of Gath. Such also were many of the children (or descendants) of Anak. But it does not

appear, that in any age or nation men in general were larger than they are now. We are very sure, they were not for many centuries past, by the tombs and coffins that have been discovered, which are exactly of the same size, with those that are now in use. And in the Catacombs at Rome, the niches for the dead bodies which were hewn in the rock sixteen hundred years ago, are none of them six feet in length, and some a little under. Above all, the Pyramids of Egypt, (that of King Cheops in particular,) have beyond all reasonable doubt, remained at least three thousand years. Yet none of the Mummies (embalmed bodies) brought therefrom, are above five feet ten inches long.

5. But how then came this supposition to prevail so long and so generally in the world? I know not but it may be accounted for from hence. Great and little are relative terms, and all men judge of greatness and littleness, by comparing things with themselves. Therefore it is not strange, if we think men are smaller now, than they were when we were children. I remember a remarkable instance of this, in my own case. After having left it seven years, I had a great desire to see the school where I was brought up. When I was there, I wondered that the boys were so much smaller than they used to be when I was at school. "Many of my school-fellows, ten years ago, were taller by the head than I. And few of them that are at school now, reach up to my shoulders." Very true; but what was the reason of this? Indeed a very plain one: it was not because they were smaller, but because I was bigger than I was ten years before. I verily believe this is the cause, why men in general suppose the human race do decrease in stature. They remember the time when most of those round about them were both taller and bigger than themselves. Yea, and all men have done the same in their successive generations. Is it any wonder then, that all should have run into the same mistake, when it has been transmitted unawares from father to son, and probably will be to the end of time.

6. But there is likewise a general supposition, that the

understanding of man, and all his mental abilities, were of a larger size in the ancient days than they are now: and that the ancient inhabitants of the earth had far greater talents than the present. Men of eminent learning have been of this mind, and have contended for it with the utmost vehemence. It is granted that many of the ancient Writers, both Philosophers, Poets, and Historians, will not easily be excelled, if equalled, by those of later ages. We may instance in Homer and Virgil, as Poets; Thucydides and Livy, as Historians. But this, mean time, is to be remarked, concerning most of these Writers, that each of them spent his whole life in composing and polishing one book. What wonder then if they were exquisitely finished, when so much labour was bestowed upon them? I doubt whether any man in Europe or in the world, has taken so much pains in finishing any treatise. Otherwise it might possibly have equalled, if not excelled, any that went before.

7. But that the generality of men were not one jot wiser in ancient times, than they are at the present time, we may easily gather from the most authentic records. One of the most ancient nations, we have any certain account of, is the Egyptian. And what conception can we have of their understanding and learning, when we reflect upon the objects of their worship? These were not only the vilest of animals, as dogs and cats, but the leeks and onions that grew in their own gardens. Indeed we lately had a great man, (whose manner was to treat with the foulest abuse, all that dared to differ from him: I do not mean Dr. Johnson: he was a mere Courtier, compared to Mr. Hutchinson,) who scurrilously abused all those who are so void of common sense as to believe any such thing concerning them. He peremptorily affirms, (but without condescending to give us any proof,) That the ancient inhabitants of Egypt had a deep hidden meaning in all this. Let him believe it who can. I cannot believe it on any man's bare assertion. I believe they had no deeper meaning in worshipping cats, than our school-boys have in baiting them. And I apprehend, the

common Egyptians were just as wise three thousand years ago, as the common ploughmen in England and Wales are at this day. I suppose their natural understanding, like their stature, was on a level with ours, and their learning, their acquired knowledge, many degrees inferior, to that of persons of the same rank, either in France, Holland, or Germany.

8. However, did not the people of former times, greatly excel us in virtue? This is the point of greatest importance: the rest are but trifles in comparison of it. Now is it not universally allowed, that every age grows worse and worse? Was it not observed by the old Heathen Poet, almost two thousand years ago,

Ætas parentum, pejor avis tulit
Nos nequiores, jam daturos
Progeniem vitiosiorem.

That is, in plain prose, "The age of our parents was more vicious than that of our grandfathers. Our age is more vicious than that of our fathers. We are worse than our fathers were, and our children will be worse than we are."

9. It is certain this has been the common cry from generation to generation. And if it is not true, whence should it arise? How can we account for it? Perhaps another remark of the same Poet may help us to an answer. May it not be extracted from the general character which he gives of old men?

Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, censor, castigatorque minorum.

Is it not the common practice of the old men, to praise the past and condemn the present time? And this may probably operate much further, than one would at first imagine. When those that have more experience than we, and therefore we are apt to think more wisdom, are almost continually harping upon this, the degeneracy of the world; is it any wonder if, being accustomed from our infancy to hear how much better the world was formerly than it is now, (and so it really seemed to them, when they were

young, and just come into the world, and when the cheerfulness of youth gave a pleasing air, to all that was round about them,) the idea of the world's being worse and worse, should naturally grow up with us? And so it will, till we, in our turn, grow peevish, fretful, discontented, and full of melancholy complaints, "How wicked the world is grown!" How much better it was, when we were young, in the golden days that we can remember!

10. But let us endeavour, without prejudice or prepossession, to take a view of the whole affair. And, upon cool and impartial consideration, it will appear that the former days were not better than these: yea, on the contrary, that these are in many respects, beyond comparison better than they. It will clearly appear, that as the stature of men was nearly the same from the beginning of the world, so the understanding of men, in similar circumstances, has been much the same, from the time of God's bringing a flood upon the earth unto the present hour. We have no reason to believe that the uncivilized nations of Africa, America, or the South-Sea Islands, had ever a better understanding, or were in a less barbarous state than they are now. Neither on the other hand, have we any sufficient proof, that the natural understandings of men in the most civilized countries, Babylon, Persia, Greece, or Italy, were stronger, or more improved, than those of the Germans, French, or English now alive. Nay, have we not reason to believe, that by means of better instruments we have attained that knowledge of nature, which few, if any of the ancients ever attained. So that in this respect, the advantage, (and not a little one,) is clearly on our side: and we ought to acknowledge with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift, That the former days were not to be compared with these wherein we live.

11. But the principal inquiry still remains. Were not "the former days better than these," with regard to virtue? or to speak more properly, religion? This deserves a full consideration.

By religion I mean, The love of God and man, filling

the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is, the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it, the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship. And I would calmly enquire, Which of the former times were better than these, with regard to this? to the religion experienced and practised by Archbishop Fenelon, in France, Bishop Kenn, in England, and Bishop Bedell, in Ireland?

12. We need not extend our enquiry beyond the period when life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel. And it is allowed, that the days immediately succeeding the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, were better even in this respect, even with regard to religion, than any which have succeeded them.

But setting aside this short age of golden days, I must repeat the question, Which of the former days were better than the present, in every known part of the habitable world?

13. Was the former part of this century better either in these islands or any part of the continent? I know no reason at all to affirm this. I believe every part of Europe was fully as void of religion in the reign of Queen Anne, as it is at this day. It is true, luxury increases to a high degree, in every part of Europe. And so does the scandal of England, profaneness, in every part of the kingdom. But it is also true, that the most infernal of all vices, cruelty, does as swiftly decrease. And such instances of it as in times past continually occurred, are now very seldom heard of. Even in war, that savage barbarity which was every where practised, has been discontinued for many years.

14. Was the last century more religious than this? In the former part of it, there was much of the form of religion. And some undoubtedly experienced the power thereof. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was it so mingled with worldly design, and with

a total contempt both of truth, justice, and mercy, as brought that scandal upon all religion, which is hardly removed to this day. Was there more true religion in the preceding century, the age of the reformation? There was doubtless in many countries a considerable reformation of religious opinions: yea, and the modes of worship, which were much changed for the better, both in Germany and several other places. But it is well known that Luther himself complained with his dying breath, "The people that are called by my name, (though I wish they were called by the name of Christ,) are reformed as to their opinions and modes of worship; but their tempers and lives are the same they were before." Even then both justice and mercy were so shamelessly trodden under foot, that an eminent writer computes the number of those that were slaughtered, during those religious contests, to have been no less than forty millions, within the compass of forty years!

15. We may step back above a thousand years from this, without finding any better time. No Historian gives us the least intimation of any such, till we come to the age of Constantine the Great. Of this period several writers have given us most magnificent accounts. Yea, one eminent Author, no less a man than Dr. Newton, the late Bishop of Bristol, has been at no small pains to shew that the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, and the emoluments which he bestowed upon the Church with an unsparing hand, were the events which are signified in the Revelation, by "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!"

16. But I cannot in anywise subscribe to the Bishop's opinion in this matter. So far from it, that I have been long convinced from the whole tenor of Ancient History, that this very event, Constantine's calling himself a Christian, and pouring that flood of wealth and honour on the Christian Church, the Clergy in particular, was productive of more evil to the Church, than all the Ten Persecutions

put together. From the time that power, riches, and honour of all kinds, were heaped upon the Christians, vice of all kinds came in like a flood, both on the Clergy and Laity. From the time that the Church and State, the kingdoms of Christ and of the world, were so strangely and unnaturally blended together, Christianity and Heathenism were so thoroughly incorporated with each other, that they will hardly ever be divided, till Christ comes to reign upon earth. So that, instead of fancying, that the glory of the New Jerusalem covered the earth at that period, we have terrible proof that it was then, and has ever since been covered with the smoke of the bottomless pit.

17. However, were not the days antecedent to this, those of the third century, better beyond all comparison, than any that followed them? This has been almost universally believed. Few doubt but in the age before Constantine, the Christian Church was in its glory, worshipping God in the beauty of holiness. But was it so indeed? What says St. Cyprian, who lived in the midst of that century, a witness above all exception, and one that sealed the truth with his blood? What account does he give, of what he saw with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears? Such a one as would almost make one imagine he was painting to the life, not the ancient Church of Carthage, but the modern Church of Rome. According to his account, such abominations even then prevailed over all orders of men, that it was not strange God poured out his fury upon them in blood, by the grievous persecutions which followed.

18. Yea, and before this, even in the first century, even in the Apostolic age, what account does St. John give of several of the Churches, which he himself had planted in Asia! How little were those congregations better than many in Europe at this day! Nay, forty or fifty years before that, within thirty years of the descent of the Holy Ghost, were there not such abominations in the Church of Corinth, as were "not even named among the Heathens?" So early did the "mystery of iniquity" begin to work in the

Christian Church! So little reason have we to appeal to the former days, as though they were "better than these!"

19. To affirm this, therefore, as commonly as it is done, is not only contrary to truth, but is an instance of black ingratitude to God, and a grievous affront to his blessed Spirit. For whoever makes a fair and candid enquiry, will easily perceive that true religion has in no-wise decreased, but greatly increased in the present century. To instance in one capital branch of religion, the love of our neighbour. Is not persecution well nigh vanished from the face of the earth? In what age did Christians of every denomination shew such forbearance to each other? When before was such lenity shewn by Governors toward their respective subjects? Not only in Great Britain and Ireland; but in France and Germany, yea, every part of Europe? Nothing like this has been seen since the time of Constantine; no, not since the time of the Apostles.

20. If it be said, "Why this is the fruit of the general infidelity, the Deism which has overspread all Europe:" I answer, whatever be the cause, we have reason greatly to rejoice in the effect. And if the all-wise God has brought so great and universal a good, out of this dreadful evil, so much the more should we magnify his astonishing Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, herein. Indeed so far as we can judge, this was the most direct way, whereby *nominal* Christians could be prepared, first for tolerating, and afterwards for receiving *real* Christianity. While the Governors were themselves unacquainted with it, nothing but this could induce them to suffer it. O the depth both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! Causing a total disregard for all religion, to pave the way for the revival of the only Religion which was worthy of God! I am not assured whether this be the case or not, in France and Germany. But it is so beyond all contradiction in North America: the total indifference of the government there, whether there be any religion or none, leaves room for the propagation

of true, scriptural Religion, without the least let or hinderance.

21. But above all this, while luxury and profaneness have been increasing on the one hand, on the other, benevolence and compassion toward all the forms of human woe, have increased in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world. In proof of this, we see more Hospitals, Infirmaries, and other places of public Charity, have been erected, at least in and near London, within this century, than in five hundred years before. And suppose this has been owing in part to vanity, desire of praise, yet have we cause to bless God, that so much good has sprung even from this imperfect motive.

22. I cannot forbear mentioning one instance more, of the goodness of God to us in the present age. He has lifted up his standard in our Islands, both against luxury, profaneness, and vice of every kind. He caused, nearly fifty years ago, as it were, a grain of mustard-seed to be sown near London, and it has now grown and put forth great branches, reaching from sea to sea. Two or three poor people met together, in order to help each other to be real Christians. They increased to hundreds, to thousands, to myriads, still pursuing their one point, real religion, the love of God and man, ruling all their tempers, and words, and actions. Now I will be bold to say, such an event as this, considered in all its circumstances, has not been seen upon earth before, since the time that St. John went to Abraham's Bosom.

23. Shall we now say, "The former days were better than these?" God forbid we should be so unwise and so unthankful. Nay, rather let us praise him all the day long; for he hath dealt bountifully with us. No *former time*, since the Apostles left the earth, has been *better than the present*. None has been comparable to it in several respects. We are not born out of due time, but in the day of his power, a day of glorious salvation, wherein he is hastening to renew the whole race of mankind in righteousness

and true holiness. How brightly hath the Sun of Righteousness already shone on various parts of the earth! And how many gracious showers has he already poured down upon his inheritance! How many precious souls has he already gathered into his garner, as ripe shocks of corn! May we be always ready to follow them, crying in our hearts, "Come, LORD JESUS! Come quickly!"

SERMON CVIII.

ON, WHAT IS MAN?

PSALM VIII. 3, 4.

"*When I consider thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers, the Moon and the Stars, which thou hast ordained; What is Man?*"

HOW often has it been observed, That the Book of Psalms is a rich treasury of devotion, which the Wisdom of God has provided to supply the wants of his children in all generations. In all ages the Psalms have been of singular use, to those that loved or feared God. Not only to the pious Israelites, but to the children of God in all nations. And this book has been of sovereign use to the Church of God, not only while it was in its state of infancy, (so beautifully described by St. Paul in the former part of the fourth chapter to the Galatians,) but also since, in the fulness of time, "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." The Christians in every age and nation, have availed themselves of this divine treasure, which has richly supplied the wants, not only of *babes in Christ*, of those who were just setting out in the ways of God, but of those also who had made good progress therein; yea, of such as were swiftly advancing toward "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The subject of this Psalm is beautifully proposed in the beginning of it, "O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is

thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens?" It celebrates the glorious wisdom and love of God, as the Creator and Governor of all things. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David wrote this Psalm in a bright star-light night, while he observed the moon also "walking in her brightness:" that while he surveyed

"This fair half-round, the ample azure sky,
Terribly large, and beautifully bright,
With stars unnumber'd, and unmeasur'd light,"

he broke out, from the fulness of his heart, into that natural exultation, "When I consider thy heaven, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man?" How is it possible that the Creator of these, the innumerable armies of heaven and earth, should have any regard to this speck of creation, whose time "passeth away like a shadow?"

"Thy frame but dust, thy stature but a span,
A moment thy duration, foolish man!"

What is Man? I would consider this, first, with regard to his Magnitude; and, secondly, with regard to his Duration.

1. 1. Consider we, first, What is Man with regard to his Magnitude. And in this respect, what is any one individual, compared to all the inhabitants of Great Britain? He shrinks into nothing in the comparison. How inconceivably little is one compared to eight or ten millions of people? Is he not

"Lost like a drop in the unbounded main?"

2. But what are all the inhabitants of Great-Britain, compared to all the inhabitants of the earth? These have frequently been supposed to amount to about four hundred millions. But will this computation be allowed to be just, by those who maintain China alone to contain fifty-eight millions? If it be true, that this one empire contains little less than sixty millions, we may easily suppose, that the inhabitants of the whole terraqueous globe amount to four thousand millions of inhabitants, rather than four hundred. And what is any single individual, in comparison of this number?

3. But what is the magnitude of the earth itself, compared to that of the Solar System? Including, beside that vast body the Sun, so immensely larger than the earth, the whole train of primary and secondary planets: several of which (I mean of the secondary planets; suppose the satellites or moons of Jupiter and Saturn) are abundantly larger than the whole Earth?

4. And yet what is the whole quantity of matter contained in the Sun and all those primary and secondary Planets, with all the spaces comprised in the Solar System, in comparison of that which is pervaded by those amazing bodies, the Comets? Who but the Creator himself can "tell the number of these, and call them all by their names?" Yet what is even the orbit of a Comet, and the space contained therein, to the space which is occupied by the fixed stars? which are at so immense a distance from the Earth, that they appear when they are viewed through the largest telescope, just as they do to the naked eye?

5. Whether the bounds of the Creation do or do not extend beyond the region of the fixed stars, who can tell? only the morning-stars, who sang together, when the foundations thereof were laid. But that it is finite, that the bounds of it are fixed, we have no reason to doubt. We cannot doubt, but when the Son of God had finished all the work which he created and made, he said,

——————— "These be thy bounds!
This be thy just circumference, O World!"

But what is man to this?

6. We may take one step, and only one step farther still. What is the space of the whole creation, what is all finite space, that is, or can be conceived in comparison of infinite? What is it but a point, a cypher, compared to that which is filled by him that is all in all! Think of this, and then ask, *What is man?*

7. What is man, that the great God, who filleth heaven and earth, "the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity," should stoop so inconceivably low, as to *be mindful of him?*

Would not reason suggest to us, that so diminutive a creature would be overlooked by him in the immensity of his works? Especially when we consider,

II. Secondly, What is Man, with regard to his Duration?

1. *The days of Man*, since the last reduction of human life, which seems to have taken place in the time of Moses, (and not improbably was revealed to that man of God, at the time that he made this declaration,) *are threescore years and ten.* This is the general standard which God hath now appointed. "And if men be so strong, (perhaps one in a hundred,) that they come to fourscore years, yet then is their strength but labour and sorrow: so soon passeth it away, and we are gone!"

2. Now what a poor pittance of duration is this, compared to the life of Methuselah? "And Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty and nine years." But what are these nine hundred and sixty-nine years to the duration of an angel, which began "or ever the mountains were brought forth," or the foundations of the earth were laid? And what is the duration which has past, since the creation of angels, to that which past before they were created, to unbeginning eternity? To that half of eternity (if one may so speak) which had then elapsed? And what are threescore years and ten to this?

3. Indeed what proportion can there possibly be, between any finite and infinite duration? What proportion is there between a thousand, or ten thousand years, or ten thousand times ten thousand ages, and eternity? I know not that the inexpressible disproportion between any conceivable part of time and eternity, can be illustrated in a more striking manner, than it is in the well-known passage of St. Cyprian; "Suppose there were a ball of sand as large as the globe of the earth, and suppose one grain of this were to be annihilated in a thousand years; yet that whole space of time wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear less, yea unspeakably, infinitely less proportion, to eternity, than a single grain of sand would bear to that whole mass."

What then are the seventy years of human life, in comparison of eternity? In what terms can the proportion between these be expressed? It is nothing, yea infinitely less than nothing!

4. If then we add to the littleness of man the inexpressible shortness of his duration, is it any wonder that a man of reflection should sometimes feel a kind of fear, lest the great, eternal, infinite Governor of the Universe, should disregard so diminutive a creature as man? A creature so every way inconsiderable, when compared either with immensity or eternity? Did not both these reflections glance through, if not dwell upon the mind of the royal Psalmist? Thus, in contemplation of the former, he breaks out into the strong words of the text, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, What is man, that thou shouldest be mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou shouldest regard him?" He is indeed, (to use St. Augustine's words, *Aliqua portio creaturæ tuæ)* some portion of thy creation. But *quantula portio!* How amazingly small a portion! How utterly beneath thy notice! It seems to be in contemplation of the latter, that he cries out in the hundred and forty-fourth Psalm, "Lord! what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him; or the son of man that thou shouldest so regard him? Man is like a thing of nought." Why? "His time passeth away like a shadow." In this, (although in a very few places,) the new translation of the Psalms, that is bound up in our Bibles, is perhaps more proper than the old, that which we have in the Common Prayer Book. It runs thus, "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man; that thou makest account of him?" According to the former translation, David seems to be amazed that the eternal God, considering the littleness of man, should have so much respect unto him, and should so much regard him! But in the latter, he seems to wonder, seeing the life of man "passeth away like a shadow," that God should take any knowledge of him at all, or make any account of him!

5. And it is natural for us to make the same reflection, and to entertain the same fear. But how may we prevent this uneasy reflection, and effectually cure this fear? First, by considering what David does not appear to have taken at all into his account, namely, That the body is not the man: that man is not only a house of clay, but an immortal spirit; a spirit made in the image of God, an incorruptible picture of the God of glory; a spirit that is of infinitely more value than the whole earth! Of more value than the sun, moon, and stars, put together: yea, than the whole material creation. Consider, that the spirit of man is not only of a higher order, of a more excellent nature than any part of the visible world; but also more durable, not liable either to dissolution or decay. We know all the things "which are seen are temporal," of a changing, transient nature: but "the things which are not seen, (such as is the soul of man in particular,) are eternal." "They shall perish," but the soul remaineth. They all shall "wax old as a garment;" but when heaven and earth shall pass away, the soul shall not pass away.

6. Consider, secondly, That declaration which the Father of spirits hath made to us by the Prophet Hosea, "I am God, and not man: therefore my compassions fail not." As if he had said, If I were only a man, or an angel, or any finite being, my knowledge might admit of bounds, and my mercy might be limited. But "my thoughts are not as your thoughts, and my mercy is not as your mercy. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts," and "my mercy, my compassion, my ways of shewing it, higher than your ways."

7. That no shadow of fear might remain, no possibility of doubting; to shew what manner of regard the great eternal God bears to little, short-lived man, but especially to his immortal part, God gave his Son, "his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." See how God loved the world! The Son of God, that was God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the

Father, in majesty co-eternal, "emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And all this he suffered not for himself, but for us men and for our salvation. "He bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree," that "by his stripes we might be healed." After this demonstration of his love, is it possible to doubt any longer of God's tender regard for man, even though he was "dead in trespasses and sins?" Even when he saw us in our sins and in our blood, he said unto us, Live! Let us then fear no more. Let us doubt no more. He that "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

8. "Nay," says the Philosopher, "if God so loved the world, did he not love a thousand other worlds, as well as he did this? It is now allowed, that there are thousands, if not millions of worlds, besides this in which we live. And can any reasonable man believe, that the Creator of all these, many of which are probably as large, yea, far larger than ours, would show such astonishingly greater regard to one than to all the rest?" I answer, Suppose there were millions of worlds, yet God may see, in the abyss of his infinite wisdom, important reasons that do not appear to us, why he should shew this mercy to our's, in preference to thousands or millions of other worlds.

9. I speak this even upon the common supposition of the plurality of worlds; a very favourite notion with all those who deny the Christian Revelation: and for this reason; because it affords them a foundation for so plausible an objection to it. But the more I consider that supposition, the more I doubt of it. Insomuch that, if it were allowed by all the Philosophers in Europe, still I could not allow it, without stronger proof than any I have met with yet.

10. "Nay, but is not the argument of the great Huygens, sufficient to put it beyond all doubt? When we view, says that able Astronomer, the Moon through a good telescope, we clearly discover 'rivers and mountains on her spotted globe.' Now where rivers are, there are doubtless

plants and vegetables of various kinds. And where vegetables are, there are undoubtedly animals, yea, rational ones as on earth. It follows then that the Moon has its inhabitants, and probably near akin to our's. But if our Moon be inhabited, we may easily suppose, so are all the Secondary Planets; and in particular, all the Satellites or Moons of Jupiter and Saturn. And if the Secondary Planets are inhabited, why not the Primary? Why should we doubt it of Jupiter and Saturn themselves, as well as Mars, Venus, and Mercury?"

11. But do not you know, that Mr. Huygens himself before he died, doubted of this whole hypothesis? For upon farther observation, he found reason to believe, that the Moon has no atmosphere. He observed, that in a total eclipse of the Sun, on the removal of the shade from any part of the earth, the Sun immediately shines brightly upon it; whereas if the Moon had an atmosphere, the Solar light, while it shone through that atmosphere, would appear dim and dusky. Thus, after an eclipse of the Moon, first a dusky light appears on that part of it, from which the shadow of the earth removes, while that light passes through the atmosphere of the earth. Hence it appears, that the Moon has no atmosphere. Consequently, it has no clouds, no rain, no springs, no rivers; and therefore no plants, or animals. But if there be no proof or probability that the Moon is inhabited, neither have we any proof, that the other Planets are. Consequently, the foundation being removed, the whole fabric falls to the ground.

12. But, you will say, "Suppose this argument fail, we may infer the same conclusion, the plurality of worlds, from the unbounded wisdom, and power, and goodness of the Creator. It was fully as easy to him, to create thousands or millions of worlds as one. Can any one then believe that he would exert all his power and wisdom, in creating a single world? What proportion is there between this speck of creation, and the Great God that filleth heaven and earth! While

"We know the power of his Almighty hand
Could form another world from every sand!"

13. To this boasted proof, this *argumentum palmarium* of the learned infidels, I answer, Do you expect to find any proportion between finite and infinite? Suppose God had created a thousand more worlds than there are grains of sand in the universe, what proportion would all these together bear to the infinite Creator? still, in comparison of him, they would be, not a thousand times, but infinitely less than a mite compared to the universe. Have done then with this childish prattle, about the proportion of creatures to their Creator: and leave it to the all-wise God, to create what and when he pleases. For who besides himself, "hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?"

13. Suffice it then for us to know this plain and comfortable truth, That the Almighty Creator hath shown that regard to this poor, little creature of a day, which he hath not shown even to the inhabitants of heaven, "who kept not their first estate." He hath given us his Son, his only Son, both to live and to die for us! O let us live unto him, that we may die unto him, and live with him for ever!

SERMON CVIII.

ON ATTENDING THE CHURCH SERVICE.

1 SAMUEL II. 17.

"*The Sin of the young Men was very great.*"

1. THE corruption, not only of the Heathen world, but likewise of them that were called Christians, has been matter of sorrow and lamentation to pious men, almost from the time of the Apostles. And hence as early as the second century, within a hundred years of St. John's removal from the earth, men who were afraid of being partakers of other men's sins, thought it their duty to separate from them. Hence in every age many have retired from the world, lest they should be stained with the pollution of it. In the third century many carried this so far, as to run into deserts and turn hermits. But in the following age this took another turn. Instead of turning hermits, they turned monks. Religious houses now began to be built in every christian country. And religious communities were established, both of men and women, who were entirely secluded from the rest of mankind, having no intercourse with their nearest relations, nor with any but such as were confined, generally for life, within the same walls.

2. This spirit of literally renouncing the world, by retiring into religious houses, did not so generally prevail after the Reformation. Nay, in Protestant countries, houses

of this kind were totally suppressed. But still too many serious persons, (chiefly incited thereto by those that are commonly called Mystic Writers) were eager to seclude themselves from the world, and run into solitude; supposing this to be the best, if not the only way, of escaping the pollution that is in the world.

3. One thing which powerfully inclined them to separate from the several churches, or religious Societies, to which they had belonged, even from their infancy, was the belief that no good was to be expected from the ministration of unholy men. "What," said they, "can we think that a holy God will bless the ministry of wicked men? Can we imagine that they who are themselves strangers to the grace of God will manifest that grace to others? Is it to be supposed that God ever did, or ever will work by the children of the devil? And if this cannot be supposed, ought we not to "come out from among them and be separate?"

4. For more than twenty years, this never entered into the thoughts of those that were called Methodists. But as more and more who had been brought up Dissenters joined with them, they brought in more and more prejudice against the Church. In process of time, various circumstances concurred to increase, and to confirm it. Many had forgotten, that we were all at our first setting out determined members of the Established Church. Yea, it was one of our original rules, that every member of our Society, should attend the Church and Sacrament, unless he had been bred among Christians of some other denomination.

5. In order, therefore, to prevent others from being puzzled and perplexed, as so many have been already, it is necessary, in the highest degree, to consider this matter thoroughly; calmly to inquire, Whether God ever did bless the ministry of ungodly men? And whether he does so at this hour? Here is a plain matter of fact: if God never did bless it, we ought to separate from the Church; at least where we have reason to believe that the minister is an unholy man. If he ever did bless it, and does so still, then we ought to continue therein.

6. Nineteen years ago, we considered this question in our public Conference at Leeds, "Whether the Methodists ought to separate from the Church?" And, after a long and candid inquiry, it was determined, *nemine contradicente*, That it was not expedient for them to separate. The reasons were set down at large: and they stand equally good at this day.

7. In order to put this matter beyond all possible dispute, I have chosen to speak from these words, which give a fair occasion of observing, what the dealings of God in his Church have been, even from so early a period: for it is generally allowed, that Eli lived at least a thousand years before our Lord came into the world. In the verses preceding the text we read, (ver. 12, &c.) "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." They were wicked to an uncommon degree. Their profane violence, with respect to the sacrifices, is related with all its shocking circumstances, in the following verses. But (what was a greater abomination still) "they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation!" ver. 22. On both these accounts "the sin of the young men was very great, and men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

8. May I be permitted to make a little digression, in order to correct a mistranslation in the twenty-fifth verse? In our translation it runs thus, "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them." Ought it not rather to be rendered, "Therefore the Lord was about to slay them?" As if he had said, The Lord would not suffer their horrid and stubborn wickedness to escape unpunished; but because of that wickedness, he slew them both in one day, by the hand of the Philistines. They did not sin, (as might be imagined from the common translation,) because God had determined to slay them: but God therefore determined to slay them, because they had thus sinned.

9. But to return: Their sin was the more inexcusable, because they could not be ignorant of that dreadful conse-

quence thereof, that by reason of their enormous wickedness, "men abhorred the offering of the Lord." Many of the people were so deeply offended, that if they did not wholly refrain from the public worship, yet they attended it with pain, abhorring the priests, while they honoured the sacrifice.

10. And have we any proof, that the priests who succeeded them, were more holy than they, than Hophni and Phinehas, not only till God permitted ten of the tribes to be separated from their brethren, and from the worship he had appointed: but even till Judah as well as Israel, for the wickedness of the priests. as well as of the people, were carried into captivity?

11. What manner of men they were about the time of the Babylonish captivity, we learn from various passages in the Prophecy of Jeremiah. From which it manifestly appears, that people and priests wallowed in all manner of vices. And how little they were amended, after they were brought back into their own land, we may gather from those terrible words in the prophecy of Malachi: "And now, O ye Priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my Name, saith the Lord of Hosts, I will send even a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye would not lay it to heart. Behold I will corrupt your seed, and I will spread dung upon their faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and men shall take you away with it," Mal. ii. 1, 2.

12. Such were the priests of God in their several generations, till he brought the great High Priest into the world! And what manner of men were they during the time that he ministered upon earth? A large and particular account of their character we have in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew: and a worse character it would be difficult to find in all the Oracles of God. But may it not be said, "Our Lord does not there direct his discourse to the Priests, but to the Scribes and Pharisees?" He does; but this is the same thing. For the Scribes were what we

now term Divines, the public Teachers of the people. And many, if not most of the priests, especially all the strictest sort of them, were Pharisees: so that in giving the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, he gives that of the Priests also.

13. Soon after the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, in the infancy of the Christian Church, there was indeed a glorious change. "Great grace was then upon them all:" ministers as well as people. "The multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and one soul." But how short a time did this continue! How soon did the fine gold become dim! Long before even the Apostolic age expired, St. Paul himself had ground to complain, that some of his fellow-labourers had *forsaken* him, having "loved the present world." And not long after, St. John reproved divers of the angels, that is, the Ministers of the Churches in Asia, because even in that early period, their "works were not found perfect before God."

14. Thus did *the mystery of iniquity* begin to *work*, in the ministers as well as the people, even before the end of the Apostolic age. But how much more powerfully did it work, as soon as those master-builders, the Apostles, were taken out of the way! Both ministers and people were then farther and farther removed from the hope of the Gospel. Insomuch that when St. Cyprian, about a hundred and fifty years after the death of St. John, describes the spirit and behaviour both of Laity and Clergy that were round about him, one would be ready to suppose he was giving us a description of the present Clergy and Laity of Europe. But the corruption which had been creeping in drop by drop, during the second and third century, in the beginning of the fourth, when Constantine called himself a Christian, poured in upon the Church with a full tide. And whoever reads the history of the Church, from the time of Constantine to the Reformation, will easily observe that all the abominations of the Heathen world, and in the following ages, of the Mahometans, overflowed every part of it. And in every nation and city, the Clergy were not a whit more innocent than the Laity.

15. "But was there not a very considerable change in the body of the Clergy, as well as the Laity, at the time of the glorious Reformation from Popery?" Undoubtedly there was: and they were not only reformed from very many erroneous opinions, and from numberless superstitious and idolatrous modes of worship, till then prevailing over the Western Church; but they were also exceedingly reformed, with respect to their lives and tempers. More of the ancient, scriptural Christianity was to be found, almost in every part of Europe. Yet notwithstanding this, all the works of the devil, all ungodliness and unrighteousness, sin of every kind, continued to prevail, both over Clergy and Laity, in all parts of Christendom. Even those Clergymen who most warmly contended about the externals of religion, were very little concerned for the life and power of it, for piety, justice, mercy, and truth.

16. However, it must be allowed, that ever since the Reformation, and particularly in the present century, the behaviour of the Clergy in general is greatly altered for the better. And should it be granted, that in so many parts of the Romish Church, they are nearly the same as they were before, it must be granted likewise, that most of the Protestant Clergy, are far different from what they were. They have not only more learning of the most valuable kind, but abundantly much more religion. Insomuch that the English and Irish Clergy are generally allowed to be not inferior to any in Europe, for piety as well as for knowledge.

17. And all this being allowed, what lack they yet? Can any thing be laid to their charge? I wish calmly and candidly to consider this point, in the fear and in the presence of God. I am far from desiring to aggravate the defects of my brethren, or to paint them in the strongest colours. Far be it from me, to treat others as I have been treated myself; to return evil for evil, or railing for railing. But to speak the naked truth, not with anger or contempt, as too many have done; I acknowledge, that many, if not most of those that were appointed to minister in holy

things, with whom it has been my lot to converse, in almost every part of England or Ireland, for forty or fifty years last past, have not been eminent either for knowledge or piety. It has been loudly affirmed, That most of those persons now in connexion with *me*, who believe it their duty to call sinners to repentance, having been taken immediately from low trades, tailors, shoemakers, and the like, are a set of poor, stupid, illiterate men, that scarcely know their right hand from their left; yet I cannot but say, that I would sooner cut off my right hand, than suffer one of them to speak a word in any of our Chapels, if I had not reasonable proof, that he had more knowledge in the Holy Scriptures, more knowledge of himself, more knowledge of God and of the things of God; than nine in ten of the Clergymen I have conversed with, either at the Universities, or elsewhere.

18. In the mean time I gladly allow that this charge does not concern the whole body of the Clergy: undoubtedly there are many Clergymen in these kingdoms, that are not only free from outward sin, but are men of eminent learning, and what is infinitely more, deeply acquainted with God. But still I am constrained to confess, that the far greater part of those ministers I have conversed with for above half a century, have not been holy men, not devoted to God, not deeply acquainted either with God or themselves. It could not be said, that they *set* their "affections on things above, not on things of the earth;" or that their desire, and the business of their lives was, To save their own souls and those that heard them.

19. I have taken this unpleasing view of a melancholy scene, of the character of those who have been appointed of God to be shepherds of souls for so many ages, in order to determine this question, Ought the children of God to refrain from his ordinances, because they that administer them are unholy men? A question with which many persons have been exceedingly perplexed. "Ought we not," say they, "to refrain from the ministrations of ungodly men? For is it possible that we should receive any good

from the hands of those that know not God? Can we suppose that the grace of God was ever conveyed to men by the servants of the devil?"

What saith the Scripture? Let us keep closely to this, and we shall not be misled. We have seen there what manner of men most of these have been who have ministered in holy things for many ages. Two or three thousand years ago, we read, "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord." But was this a sufficient reason for the Israelites to refrain from their administrations? It is true, they "abhorred the offerings of the Lord" on their account. And yet they constantly attended them. And do you suppose that Samuel, holy as he was, ever advised them to do otherwise? Were not the Priests and public Teachers equally strangers to God, from this time to that of the Babylonish captivity? Undoubtedly they were. But did Isaiah or any of the Prophets exhort them for that cause to forsake the ordinances of God? Were they not equally ungodly from the time of the Babylonish captivity, to the coming of Christ? How clearly does this appear, were there no other proof, from the Prophecies of Jeremiah and Malachi! Yet did either Malachi or Jeremiah, or any other of the Prophets, exhort the people to separate themselves from these ungodly men?

20. But to bring the matter nearer to ourselves. Never were any Priests or public Teachers more corrupt, more totally estranged from God, than those in the days of our blessed Lord. Were they not mere whited walls? Were not those that were the best of them, painted sepulchres? Full of pride, lust, envy, covetousness? Of all ungodliness and unrighteousness? Is not this the account which our Lord himself, who knew what was in man, gives of them? But did he therefore refrain from that public service, which was performed by these very men? Or did he direct his Apostles so to do? Nay, just the contrary: in consequence of which, as he constantly attended them himself, so likewise did his disciples.

21. There is another circumstance in our Lord's conduct,

which is worthy of our peculiar consideration. "He calls to him the twelve, and sends them forth, two by two," to preach the gospel, (Mark vi.) And as they do not go in the warfare at their own cost, the very devils "were subject unto them." Now one of these was Judas Iscariot. And did our Lord know that "he had a devil?" St. John expressly tells us he did. Yet he was coupled with another of the Apostles, and joined with them all in the same communion. Neither have we any reason to doubt but God blessed the labour of all his twelve ambassadors. But why did our Lord send *him* among them? Undoubtedly for our instruction. For a standing unanswerable proof that he "sendeth by whom he will send:" that he can and doth send salvation to men, even by those who will not accept of it themselves.

22. Our Lord gives us farther instruction upon this head: in Matthew xxiii. 1—3, we have those very remarkable words, "Then Jesus spake to the multitude, and his disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not according to their works: for they say and do not." Of these very men he gives the blackest character in the following verses. Yet is he so far from forbidding either *the multitude* or *his own disciples* to attend their ministrations, that he expressly commands them so to do, even in those words, "All things whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do." These words imply a command to hear them: for how could they observe and do what they bid them," if they did not hear it? I pray consider this, ye that say of the successors of these ungodly men, "They say and do not: therefore we ought not to hear them." You see, your Master draws no such inference; nay the direct contrary. O be not wiser than your Master: follow his advice, and do not reason against it.

23. But how shall we reconcile this with the direction given by St. Paul to the Corinthians? "If any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater,

or a railer, with such an one, no not to eat," 1 Cor. v. 11. How is it reconcileable with that direction in his second epistle, (chap. vi. 17,) "Come out from the midst of them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing?" I answer, the former passage has no relation at all to the present question. It does not concern Ministers, good or bad. The plain meaning of it is, Have no intimacy with any that is called a Christian, and lives in any open sin: a weighty exhortation, which should be much attended to by all the children of God. As little does the other passage refer to Ministers or Teachers of any kind. In this the Apostle is exhorting the children of God, to break off all intercourse with the children of the devil. The words literally are, "Go out from the midst of them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Intimating that they could not continue united with them, without being more or less partakers of their sins. We may, therefore, boldly affirm, that neither St. Paul nor any other of the inspired Writers, ever advised holy men to separate from the Church wherein they were, because the Ministers were unholy.

24. Nevertheless it is true, that many pious Christians, as was observed before, did separate themselves from the Church, some even in the second, and many more in the third century. Some of these retired into the desert, and lived altogether alone: others built themselves houses, afterwards termed Convents, and only secluded themselves from the rest of the world. But what was the fruit of this separation? The same that might easily be foreseen. It encreased and confirmed in an astonishing degree, the total corruption of the Church. The salt which was thus heaped up in a corner, had effectually lost its savour. The light which was put under a bushel, no longer shone before men. In consequence of this, ungodliness and unrighteousness reigned without control. The world being given up into the hands of the devil, wrought all his works with greediness. And gross darkness, joined with all manner of wickedness, covered the whole earth.

25. "But if all this wickedness was not a sufficient reason for separating from a corrupt Church, why did Calvin and Luther, with their followers, separate from the Church of Rome?" I answer, They did not properly separate from it, but were violently thrust out of it. They were not suffered to continue therein, upon any other terms than subscribing to all the errors of that Church, and joining in all their superstition and idolatry. Therefore this separation lay at *their* door. With the Reformers it was not a matter of choice, but of necessity. And if such necessity were now laid upon us, we ought to separate from any Church under heaven.

26. There were not the same reasons why various bodies of men should afterwards separate from the Church of England. No sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them; neither are at this day. Most of them separated, either because of some *opinions*, or some *modes of worship*, which they did not approve of. Few of them assigned the unholiness either of the Clergy or Laity, as the cause of their separation. And if any did so, it did not appear that they themselves were a jot better, than those they separated from.

27. But the grand reason, which many give for separating from the Church, namely, that the Ministers are unholy men, is founded on this assertion, That the ministration of evil men can do no good; that we may call the sacraments *means of grace;* but men who do not receive the grace of God themselves, cannot convey that grace to others. So that we can never expect to receive the blessing of God through the servants of the devil.

This argument is extremely plausible, and is indeed the strongest that can be urged. Yet before you allow it to be conclusive, you should consider a few things.

28. Consider, first, Did the Jewish sacraments convey no saving grace to the hearers, because they were administered by unholy men? If so, none of the Israelites were saved, from the time of Eli, to the coming of Christ. For their Priests were not a whit better than ours; if they were

not much worse. But who will dare to affirm this? Which is no less in effect, than to affirm, That all the children of Israel went to hell for eleven or twelve hundred years together!

29. Did the ordinances administered in the time of our blessed Lord convey no grace to those that attended them? Surely, then, the Holy Ghost would not have commended "Zacharias and Elizabeth for walking in these ordinances!" If the ministrations of wicked men did no good, would our Lord have commanded his followers (so far from forbidding them) to attend those of the Scribes and Pharisees? Observe, again, the remarkable words, (Matt. xxiii. 1, &c.) "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," are your appointed teachers, "all, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do."—Now what were these Scribes and Pharisees? Were they not the vilest of men? Yet these very men he commands them to hear. This command is plainly implied in those words, "Whatsoever they command you to observe, that observe and do." For unless they heard what they said, they could not do it.

30. Consider, a little farther, the dreadful consequences of affirming, that wicked Ministers do no good. That the ordinances administered by them do not convey saving grace to those that attend them. If it be so, then well nigh all the Christians, from the time of the Apostles, to that of the Reformation, are perished! For what manner of men were well nigh all the Clergy, during all those centuries? Consult the history of the church in every age, and you will find more and more proofs of their corruption. It is true, they have not been so openly abandoned since, but ever since that happy period there has been a considerable change for the better, in the Clergy, as well as the Laity. But still there is reason to fear, that even those who now minister in holy things, who are outwardly devoted to God for that purpose, (yea, and in Protestant, as well as Romish countries,) are, nevertheless, far more de-

voted to the world, to riches, honour, or pleasure, (a few comparatively excepted,) than they are to God: so that in truth they are as far from Christian holiness as earth is from heaven. If then no grace is conveyed by the ministry of wicked men, in what a case is the Christian world! How hath God forgotten to be gracious! How hath he forsaken his own inheritance! O think not so: Rather say with our own church, (though in opposition to the church of Rome, which maintains, "If the Priest does not minister with a *pure intention*, which no wicked man can do, then the sacrament is no sacrament at all:") the unworthiness of the Minister doth not hinder the efficacy of God's ordinance. The reason is plain, because the efficacy is derived, not from him that administers, but from him that ordains it. He does not, will not, suffer his grace to be intercepted, though the messenger will not receive it himself.

31. Another consequence would follow from the supposition, That no grace is conveyed by wicked ministers, namely, that a conscientious person cannot be a member of any national church in the world. For wherever he is, it is great odds, whether a holy minister be stationed there; and if there be not, it is mere lost labour to worship in that congregation. But, blessed be God, this not the case: we know by our own happy experience, and by the experience of thousands, that the Word of the Lord is not bound, though uttered by an unholy minister: and the sacraments are not dry breasts, whether he that administers be holy or unholy.

32. Consider one more consequence of this supposition, should it ever be generally received. Were all men to separate from those Churches where the minister was an unholy man: (as they ought to do, if the grace of God never did, nor could attend his ministry:) what confusion, what tumults, what commotions, would this occasion throughout Christendom! What evil-surmisings, heart-burnings, jealousies, envyings, must every where arise! What censuring, tale-bearing, strife, contention! Neither would it stop here: but from evil words the contending

parties would soon proceed to evil deeds: and rivers of blood would soon be shed, to the utter scandal of Mahometans and Heathens.

33. Let us not then trouble and embroil ourselves and our neighbours with unprofitable disputations, but all agree to spread, to the uttermost of our power, the quiet and peaceable gospel of Christ. Let us make the best of whatever ministry the Providence of God has assigned us. Near fifty years ago, a great and good man, Dr. Potter, then Archbishop of Canterbury, gave me an advice, for which I have ever since had occasion to bless God; "If you desire to be extensively useful, do not spend your time and strength, in contending for or against such things as are of a disputable nature; but in testifying against open notorious vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness." Let us keep to this; leaving a thousand disputable points to those that have no better business, than to toss the ball of controversy to and fro, let us keep closely to our point. Let us bear a faithful testimony in our several stations, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness; and with all our might recommend that inward and outward holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord."

SERMON CIX.

ON CONSCIENCE.

2 Corinthians I. 12.

" *For our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience.*"

1. HOW few words are there in the world more common than this, *Conscience?* It is in almost every one's mouth. And one would thence be apt to conclude, that no word can be found, which is more generally understood. But it may be doubted whether this is the case or not, although numberless treatises have been written upon it. For it is certain, a great part of those writers have rather puzzled the cause than cleared it, that they have usually " darkened counsel, by uttering words without knowledge."

2. The best treatise on the subject which I remember to have seen, is translated from the French of Mons. Placatt, which describes in a clear and rational manner the nature and offices of Conscience. But though it was published near a hundred years ago, it is in very few hands. And indeed a great part of those that have read it, complain of the length of it. An octavo volume of several hundreds of pages, upon so plain a subject, was likely to prove a trial of patience to most persons of understanding. It seems, therefore, there is still wanting a discourse upon the subject, short as well as clear. This, by the assistance of God, I will endeavour to supply, by shewing, First, The Nature

of Conscience; and then the several Sorts of it; after which I shall conclude with a few important Directions.

I. 1. And, first, I am to shew the Nature of Conscience. This a very pious man in the last century, (in his Sermon on Universal Conscientiousness,) describes in the following manner,—" This word, which literally signifies *Knowing with another*, excellently sets forth the Scriptural notion of it. So Job xvi. 19, 'My witness is in heaven:' and so the Apostle, Rom. ix. 1, 'I say the truth, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.' In both places it is as if he had said, God witnesseth with my conscience. Conscience is placed in the middle, under God, and above man. It is a kind of silent reasoning of the mind, whereby those things which are judged to be right are approved of with pleasure; but those which are judged evil are disapproved of with uneasiness." This is a tribunal in the breast of men, to accuse sinners, and excuse them that do well.

2. To view it in a somewhat different light, Conscience, as well as the Latin word, from which it is taken, and the Greek word, συνειδησις, necessarily imply, *The knowledge of two or more things together:* suppose the knowledge of our words and actions, and at the same time of their goodness or badness: if it be not rather the faculty whereby we know at once our actions and the quality of them.

3. Conscience, then, is that faculty, whereby we are at once conscious of our own thoughts, words, and actions, and of their merit or demerit, of their being good or bad, and, consequently, deserving either praise or censure. And some pleasure generally attends the former sentence, some uneasiness the latter. But this varies exceedingly, according to education, and a thousand other circumstances.

4. Can it be denied, that something of this is found in every man born into the world? And does it not appear, as soon as the understanding opens? as soon as reason begins to dawn? Does not every one then begin to know that there is a difference between good and evil, how imperfect soever, the various circumstances of this sense of

good and evil may be? Does not every man, for instance, know, unless blinded by the prejudices of education, (like the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope,) that it is good to honour his parents? Do not all men, however uneducated, or barbarous, allow, It is right to do to others as we would have them do to us? And are not all, who know this, condemned in their own minds, when they do any thing contrary thereto? as, on the other hand, when they act suitably thereto, they have the approbation of their own consciences?

5. This faculty seems to be what is usually meant by those who speak of *Natural Conscience;* an expression frequently found in some of our best Authors, but yet not strictly just. For though in one sense it may be termed *Natural*, because it is found in all men, yet properly speaking, it is not *Natural;* but a supernatural gift of God, above all his natural endowments. No, it is not nature but the Son of God, that is "the true light, which enlighteneth every man which cometh into the world." So that we may say to every human creature, "He," not nature, "hath shewn thee, O man! what is good." And it is his Spirit which giveth thee an inward check, which causeth thee to feel uneasy, when thou walkest in any instance contrary to the light which he hath given thee.

6. It may give a peculiar force to that beautiful passage, to consider by whom, and on what occasion the words were uttered. The persons speaking are Balak the king of Moab, and Balaam, then under divine impressions: (it seems, then "not far from the kingdom of God," although afterward he so foully revolted.) Probably Balak too at that time experienced something of the same influence.—This occasioned his *consulting with*, or asking counsel of Balaam, his proposing the question to which Balaam gives so full an answer, Micah vi. 5, &c. "O my people, (saith the Prophet in the name of God,) remember what Balak the King of Moab consulted, (it seems in the fulness of his heart,) and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.

Wherewith, (said he,) shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (This the kings of Moab had actually done, on occasions of deep distress: a remarkable account of which is recorded in the third chapter of the second book of Kings.) To this Balaam makes that noble reply, (being doubtless then taught of God,) "He hath shewed thee, O man! what is good: And what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

7. To take a more distinct view of Conscience, it appears to have a threefold-office: First, it is a *witness*, testifying what we have done, in thought, or word, or action: Secondly, it is a *judge* passing sentence on what we have done, that it is good or evil. And, Thirdly, it, in some sort, *executes* the sentence by occasioning a degree of complacency in him that does well, and a degree of uneasiness in him that does evil.

8. Professor Hutcheson, late of Glasgow, places Conscience in a different light. In his Essay on the Passions, he observes, That we have several *senses*, or natural avenues of pleasure and pain, besides the five external senses. One of these he terms, "*The public Sense*, whereby we are naturally pained at the misery of a fellow-creature, and pleased at his deliverance from it. And every man, says he, has a *moral sense*, whereby he approves of benevolence and disapproves of cruelty. Yea, he is uneasy, when he himself has done a cruel action, and pleased when he has done a generous one."

9. All this is, in some sense, undoubtedly true. But it is not true, that either the *public* or the *moral sense*, (both of which are included in the term Conscience,) is now *natural* to man. Whatever may have been the case at first, while man was in a state of innocence, both the one and the other is now a branch of that supernatural gift of God;

which we usually stile *preventing grace*. But the Professor does not at all agree with this. He sets God wholly out of the question. God has nothing to do with his scheme of virtue, from the beginning to the end. So that to say the truth, his scheme of virtue is Atheism all over. This is refinement indeed! Many have excluded God out of the world: he excludes him even out of religion!

10. But do we not mistake him? Do we take his meaning right? That it may be plain enough, that no man may mistake him, he proposes this question, "What if a man in doing a virtuous, that is, a generous action, in helping a fellow-creature, has an eye to God, either as commanding, or as promising to reward it? Then, (says he,) so far as he has an eye to God, the virtue of the action is lost. Whatever actions spring from an eye to the recompence of reward, have no virtue, no moral goodness in them." Alas! was this man called a Christian? How unjustly was he slandered with that assertion! Even Dr. Taylor, though he does not allow Christ to be God, yet does not scruple to term him "A person of consummate *virtue*." But the Professor cannot allow him any virtue at all!

11. But to return. What is Conscience in the Christian sense? It is that faculty of the soul, which, by the assistance of the grace of God, sees at one and the same time, 1, Our own tempers and lives, the real nature and quality of our thoughts, words, and actions. 2, The rule whereby we are to be directed: And, 3, The agreement or disagreement therewith. To express this a little more largely, Conscience implies, First, The faculty a man has of knowing himself, of discerning both in general and in particular, his own tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. But this it is not possible for him to do, without the assistance of the Spirit of God. Otherwise self-love, and indeed every other irregular passion, would disguise, and wholly conceal him from himself. It implies, Secondly, a knowledge of the rule, whereby he is to be directed in every particular, which is no other than the written Word of God. Conscience implies, Thirdly, a knowledge that all his thoughts,

and words, and actions, are conformable to that rule. In all these offices of Conscience, the *Unction of the Holy One* is indispensably needful. Without this neither could we clearly discern our lives and tempers; nor could we judge of the rule whereby we are to walk, or of our conformity or disconformity to it.

12. This is properly the account of a *good* Conscience, which may be in other terms expressed thus, a divine Consciousness of walking in all things according to the written Word of God. It seems indeed, that there can be no Conscience, which has not a regard to God. If you say, "Yes: there may be a consciousness of having done right or wrong, without any reference to him." I answer, This I cannot grant. I doubt whether the very words, *right* and *wrong*, according to the christian system, do not imply in the very idea of them, agreement and disagreement to the Will and Word of God. If so, there is no such thing as Conscience in a Christian, if we leave God out of the question.

13. In order to the very existence of a good Conscience, as well as to the continuance of it, the continued influence of the Spirit of God, is absolutely needful. Accordingly, the Apostle John declares to the believers of all ages, "Ye have an Unction from the Holy One; and ye know all things;" all things that are needful to your having "a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man." So he adds, "Ye have no need that any one should teach you," otherwise "than as that anointing teacheth you." That anointing clearly teacheth us those three things, First, the true meaning of God's Word. Secondly, our own tempers and lives, bringing all our thoughts, words, and actions, to remembrance; and, Thirdly, the agreement of all, with the Commandments of God.

14. Proceed we now to consider, in the second place, the several *sorts of Conscience*. A good Conscience has been spoken of already. This St. Paul expresses various ways. In one place he simply terms it, a "good Conscience toward God:" in another, "a Conscience void of offence

toward God and toward man." But he speaks still more largely in the next: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity," with a single eye, "and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." Meantime he observes that this was done, "not by fleshly wisdom:" commonly called prudence; (this never did, nor ever can produce such an effect:) "but by the grace of God," which alone is sufficient to work this in any child of man.

15. Nearly allied to this, (if it be not the same placed in another view, or a particular branch of it,) is a *tender* Conscience. One of a tender Conscience is exact in observing any deviation from the Word of God, whether in thought, or word, or work, and immediately feels remorse and self-condemnation for it. And the constant cry of his soul is,

"O that my tender soul may fly
The first abhorr'd approach of ill:
Quick as the apple of an eye
The slightest touch of sin to feel."

16. But sometimes this excellent quality, *tenderness* of Conscience, is carried to an extreme. We find some who fear where no fear is, who are continually condemning themselves without cause; imagining some things to be sinful, which the Scripture no where condemns; and supposing other things to be their duty, which the Scripture no where enjoins. This is properly termed, a *scrupulous* Conscience, and is a sore evil. It is highly expedient to yield to it as little as possible; rather it should be matter of earnest prayer, that you may be delivered from this sore evil, and may recover a sound mind: to which nothing would contribute more, than the converse of a pious and judicious friend.

17. But the extreme which is opposite to this, is far more dangerous. A *hardened* Conscience is a thousand times more dangerous than a scrupulous one: that can violate a plain command of God, without any self-condemnation; either doing what he has expressly forbidden, or neglecting what he has expressly commanded; and yet without any

remorse: yea, perhaps glorying in this very hardness of heart! Many instances of this deplorable stupidity we meet with at this day: and even among people that suppose themselves to have no small share of religion. A person is doing something which the Scripture clearly forbids. You ask, How do you dare to do this? and are answered with perfect unconcern, "O my heart does not condemn me." I reply, "So much the worse. I would to God it did. You would then be in a safer state than you are now. It is a dreadful thing to be condemned by the word of God, and yet not condemned by your own heart!" If we can break the least of the known commands of God, without any self-condemnation, it is plain that the god of this world hath hardened our hearts. If we do not soon recover from this, we shall be *past feeling*, and our Consciences (as St. Paul speaks) will be *seared as with a hot iron.*

18. I have now only to add a few important Directions. The first great point is this: Suppose we have a tender Conscience, how shall we preserve it? I believe there is only one possible way of doing this, which is, to obey it. Every act of disobedience tends to blind and deaden it, to put out its eyes, that it may not see the good and the acceptable Will of God; and to deaden the heart, that it may not feel self-condemnation, when we act in opposition to it. And on the contrary, every act of obedience gives to the Conscience a sharper and stronger sight, and a quicker feeling of whatever offends the glorious Majesty of God. Therefore, if you desire to have your Conscience always quick to discern, and faithful to accuse or excuse you: if you would preserve it always sensible and tender, be sure to obey it at all events: continually listen to its admonitions, and steadily follow them. Whatever it directs you to do, according to the Word of God, do; however grievous to flesh and blood. Whatever it forbids, if the prohibition be not grounded on the Word of God, see you do it not; however pleasing it may be to flesh and blood. The one or the other may frequently be the case. What God forbids may be pleasing to our evil nature. There you are

called to deny yourself, or deny your Master. What he enjoins may be painful to nature: there take up your cross. So true is our Lord's word, "Except a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily, he cannot be my disciple."

19. I cannot conclude this discourse better than with an extract from Dr. Annesley's Sermon on Universal Conscientiousness.*

"Be persuaded to practise the following directions, and your Conscience will continue right.

1. Take heed of every sin: count no sin small: and obey every command with your might. Watch against the first risings of sin, and beware of the borders of sin. Shun the very appearance of evil. Venture not upon temptations or occasions of sin.

2. Consider yourself as living under God's eye: live as in the sensible presence of the jealous God. Remember, all things are naked and open before him! You cannot deceive him; for he is infinite wisdom: you cannot flee from him; for he is every where: you cannot bribe him; for he is righteousness itself! Speak as knowing God hears you: walk, as knowing God besets you on every side. The Lord is with you, while you are with him: that is, you shall enjoy his favourable presence, while you live in his awful presence.

3. Be serious and frequent in the examination of your heart and life. There are some duties like those parts of the body, the want of which may be supplied by other parts: but the want of these nothing can supply. Every evening review your carriage through the day; what you have done or thought that was unbecoming your character: whether your heart has been instant upon religion, and indifferent to the world? Have a special care of two portions of time, namely, morning and evening: the morning to forethink what you have to do, and the evening to examine, Whether you have done what you ought?

* Dr. Annesley (my mother's father) was Rector of the Parish of Cripplegate.

4. Let every action have reference to your whole life, and not to a part only. Let all your subordinate ends be suitable to the great end of your living. "Exercise yourself unto godliness." Be as diligent in religion, as thou wouldst have thy children that go to school be in learning. Let thy whole life be a preparation for heaven, like the preparation of wrestlers for the combat.

5. Do not venture on sin, because Christ hath purchased a pardon; that is a most horrible abuse of Christ. For this very reason there was no sacrifice under the Law for any wilful sin; lest people should think they knew the price of sins, as those do who deal in Popish indulgencies.

6. Be nothing in your own eyes: for what is it, alas, that we have to be proud of! Our very conception was sinful; our birth painful; our life toilsome; our death we know not what! But all this is nothing to the state of our soul. If we know this, what excuse have we for pride?

7. Consult duty, not events. We have nothing to do but to mind our duty. All speculations that tend not to holiness, are among your superfluities: but forebodings of what may befall you in doing your duty, may be reckoned among your sins: and to venture upon sin to avoid danger, is to sink the ship for fear of pirates. O how quiet, as well as holy would our lives be, had we learned that single lesson, To be careful for nothing, but to do our duty, and leave all consequences to God! What madness for silly dust to prescribe to Infinite Wisdom! To let go our work, and meddle with God's! He hath managed the concerns of the world, and of every individual person in it, without giving cause of complaint to any, for above these five thousand years. And does he now need *your* counsel? Nay, it is *your* business to mind your own duty.

8. What advice you would give another, take yourself: the worst of men are apt enough to lay burdens on others, which if they would take on themselves, they would be rare Christians.

9. Do nothing on which you cannot pray for a blessing. Every action of a Christian that is good is sanctified by the

word and prayer. It becomes not a Christian to do any thing so trivial, that he cannot pray over it. And if he would but bestow a serious ejaculation on every occurrent action, such a prayer would cut off all things sinful, and encourage all things lawful.

10. Think, and speak, and do what you are persuaded Christ himself would do in your case, were he on earth. It becomes a Christian, rather to be an example, than to follow one. But by imitating Christ, you become an example to all, who was, and is, and ever will be, our absolute pattern. O Christians, how did Christ pray, and redeem time for prayer! How did Christ preach, out of whose mouth proceeded no other but gracious words! What time did Christ spend in impertinent discourse! How did Christ go up and down, doing good to men, and what was pleasing to God! Beloved, I commend to you these four memorials: 1, Mind duty. 2, What is the duty of another in your case, is your own. 3, Do not meddle with any thing, if you cannot say, The blessing of the Lord be upon it. 4, Above all, sooner forget your Christian name, than forget to eye Christ! Whatever treatment you meet with from the world, remember him and follow his steps, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth! Who when he was reviled, reviled not again: but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

SERMON CX.

ON FAITH.

HEBREWS XI. 6.

"*Without Faith it is impossible to please him.*"

1. BUT what is *Faith?* It is a divine "evidence and conviction of things not seen:" of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly it is a divine evidence and conviction of God and of the things of God. This is the most comprehensive definition of faith that ever was or can be given, as including every species of faith, from the lowest to the highest. And yet I do not remember any eminent writer, that has given a full and clear account of the several sorts of it, among all the verbose and tedious treatises which have been published upon the subject.

2. Something indeed of a similar kind has been written by that great and good man, Mr. Fletcher, in his treatise on the various Dispensations of the Grace of GOD. Herein he observes, that there are four dispensations that are distinguished from each other, by the degree of light which God vouchsafes to them that are under each. A small degree of light is given to those who are under the Heathen dispensation. These generally believed, "that there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But a far more considerable degree of light was

vouchsafed to the Jewish nation: inasmuch as to them *were entrusted* the grand means of light, the Oracles of God. Hence many of these had clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God; of their duty to God and man: yea, and of the great Promise, made to our first parents, and transmitted by them to their posterity, that "the Seed of the Woman should bruise the serpent's head."

3. But above both the Heathen and Jewish dispensation, was that of John the Baptist. To him a still clearer light was given: and he was himself "a burning and a shining light." To him it was given, to "behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Accordingly our Lord himself affirms, that "of all which had been born of women," there had not till that time arisen "a greater than John the Baptist." But nevertheless he informs us, "He that is least in the kingdom of God," the Christian dispensation, "is greater than he." By one that is under the Christian dispensation, Mr. Fletcher means, one that has received the Spirit of adoption, that has the Spirit of God witnessing "with his spirit, that he is a child of God."

In order to explain this still farther, I will endeavour, by the help of God,

First, To point out the several sorts of Faith; and, Secondly, To draw some practical Inferences.

I. In the first place, I will endeavour to point out the several sorts of Faith. It would be easy, either to reduce these to a smaller number, or to divide them into a greater. But it does not appear that this would answer any valuable purpose.

1. The lowest sort of faith, if it be any faith at all, is that of a Materialist: a man who, like the late Lord Kaim, believes there is nothing but matter in the universe. I say if it be any faith at all; for, properly speaking, it is not. It is not "an evidence or conviction of God," for they do not believe there is any: neither is it a conviction of things not seen; for they deny the existence of such. Or if, for decency's sake, they allow there is a God, yet they suppose

even him to be material. For one of their maxims is, "Jupiter est quodcunq; vides." "Whatever you see, is God." *Whatever you see!* A visible, tangible god! Excellent divinity! Exquisite nonsense!

2. The second sort of faith, if you allow a Materialist to have any, is the faith of a Deist. I mean, one who believes there is a God, distinct from matter; but does not believe the Bible. Of these we may observe two sorts: one sort are mere beasts in human shape, wholly under the power of the basest passions, and having "a downright appetite to mix with mud." Other Deists are, in most respects, rational creatures, though unhappily prejudiced against Christianity. Most of these believe the Being and Attributes of God: they believe that God made and governs the world; and that the soul does not die with the body, but will remain for ever in a state of happiness or misery.

3. The next sort of faith is the faith of Heathens, with which I join that of Mahometans. I cannot but prefer this before the faith of the Deists; because though it embraces nearly the same objects, yet they are rather to be pitied than blamed for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light. When one asked Chicali, an old Indian Chief, "Why do not you *red* men know as much as us *white* men?" He readily answered, "Because you have *the Great Word*, and we have not?"

4. It cannot be doubted but this plea will avail, for millions of modern Heathens. Inasmuch as to them little is given, of them little will be required. As to the ancient Heathens, millions of them likewise were savages. No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living up to the light they had. But many of them, especially in the civilized nations, we have great reason to hope, altho' they lived among Heathens, yet were quite of another spirit, being taught of God, by his inward voice, all the essentials of true religion. Yea, and so was that Mahometan, an Arabian, who, a century or two ago, wrote the life of Hai Ebn Yokdan. The story seems to be feigned;

but it contains all the principles of pure religion and undefiled.

5. But in general, we may surely place the faith of a Jew above that of a Heathen or Mahometan. By Jewish faith I mean, the faith of those who lived between the giving of the Law and the coming of Christ. These, that is, those that were serious and sincere among them, believed all that is written in the Old Testament. In particular, they believed, that in the fulness of time, "the Messiah would appear, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness."

6. It is not so easy to pass any judgment concerning the faith of our modern Jews. It is plain, "the veil is still upon their hearts, when Moses and the Prophets are read." The god of this world still hardens their hearts, and still blinds their eyes; "lest at any time the light of the glorious Gospel" should break in upon them. So that we may say of this people, as the Holy Ghost said to their forefathers, "The heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them," Acts xxviii. 27. Yet it is not our part to pass sentence upon them, but to leave them to their own Master.

7. I need not dwell upon the faith of John the Baptist, any more than the dispensation which he was under: because these, as Mr. Fletcher well describes them, were peculiar to himself. Setting him aside, the faith of the Roman Catholics in general, seems to be above that of the ancient Jews. If most of these are volunteers in faith, believing more than God has revealed, it cannot be denied, that they believe all which God has revealed, as necessary to salvation. In this we rejoice on their behalf: we are glad that none of those new Articles, which they added at the Council of Trent, to "the faith once delivered to the saints," does so materially contradict any of the ancient Articles, as to render them of no effect.

8. The faith of the Protestants, in general, embraces only those truths as necessary to salvation, which are clearly revealed in the Oracles of God. Whatever is plainly declared in the Old and New Testament, is the object of their faith. They believe neither more nor less, than what is manifestly contained in, and proveable by the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God is "a lantern to their feet, and a light in all their paths." They dare not on any pretence go from it, to the right hand or to the left. The written Word is the whole and sole rule of their faith, as well as practice. They believe whatsoever God has declared, and profess to do whatsoever he hath commanded. This is the proper faith of Protestants: by this they will abide and no other.

9. Hitherto faith has been considered chiefly as an evidence and conviction of such or such truths. And this is the sense wherein it is taken at this day in every part of the Christian world. But in the mean time let it be carefully observed, (for eternity depends upon it,) that neither the faith of a Roman Catholic, nor that of a Protestant, if it contains no more than this, no more than the embracing such and such truths, will avail any more before God, than the faith of a Mahometan or a Heathen, yea of a Deist or Materialist. For *can* this *faith save him?* Can it save any man either from sin or from hell? No more than it could save Judas Iscariot: no more than it could save the devil and his angels; all of whom are convinced, that every tittle of Holy Scripture is true.

10. But what is the faith which is properly saving; which brings eternal salvation to all those that keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to "fear God and work righteousness." And whosoever in every nation believes thus far, the Apostle declares is *accepted of him.* He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a *servant* of God, not properly a *son.* Meantime let it be well observed, that *the wrath of God* no longer *abideth on him.*

11. Indeed nearly fifty years ago, when the Preachers commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand Scriptural doctrine, Salvation by Faith, they were not sufficiently apprised of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand, that even one "who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" And upon their answering, "No," immediately replied, "Then you are a child of the devil." No; that does not follow. It might have been said, (and it is all that can be said with propriety,) "Hitherto you are only a *servant*: you are not a *child* of God. You have already great reason to praise God that he has called you to his honourable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto him: "and you shall see greater things than these."

12. And indeed, unless the servants of God halt by the way, they will receive the adoption of sons. They will receive the *faith* of the children of God by his *revealing* his only begotten Son in their hearts. Thus, the faith of a child is properly and directly, a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And whosoever hath this, "the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God." So the Apostle writes to the Galatians, "Ye are the sons of God by faith. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba, Father:" that is, giving you a childlike confidence in him, together with a kind affection toward him. This then it is, that (if St. Paul was taught of God, and wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost) properly constitutes the difference between a servant of God and a child of God. "He that believeth" as a child of God, "hath the witness in himself." This the servant hath not. Yet let no man discourage him: rather lovingly exhort him to expect it every moment!

13. It is easy to observe, that all the sorts of faith which we can conceive, are reducible to one or other of the preceding. But let us covet the best gifts, and follow the most excellent way. There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a Materialist, a Heathen, or a Deist; nor indeed with that of a servant: I do not know that God requires it at your hands; indeed if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away. You ought not in any wise to undervalue it, but to be truly thankful for it. Yet in the mean time, beware how you rest here: press on till you receive the Spirit of Adoption. Rest not, till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.

II. I proceed in the Second place, to draw a few Inferences from the preceding Observations.

1. And I would first infer, in how dreadful a state, if there be a God, is a Materialist! One who denies not only the "Lord that bought him," but also the Lord that made him! "Without faith it is impossible to please God:" but it is impossible he should have any faith at all; any conviction of any invisible world, for he believes there is no such thing: any conviction of the being of a God; for a material God is no God at all. For you cannot possibly suppose the sun or skies to be God, any more than you can suppose a god of wood or stone. And farther, whosoever believes all things to be mere matter, must of course believe, that all things are governed by dire necessity? Necessity that is as inexorable as the winds, as ruthless as the rocks, as merciless as the waves that dash upon them, or the poor shipwrecked mariners! Who then shall help thee, thou poor desolate wretch, when thou art most in need of help? Winds, and seas, and rocks, and storms! Such are the best helpers, which the Materialists can hope for!

2. Almost equally desperate is the case of the poor Deist, how learned, yea how moral so ever he be. For you likewise, though you may not advert to it, are really "without

God in the world." See your religion, the Religion of Nature Delineated by the ingenious Mr. Wollaston: (whom I remember to have seen when I was at school, attending the public service at the Charterhouse Chapel.) Does he found his religion upon God? Nothing less. He founds it upon truth. Abstract truth. But does he not by that expression mean God? No; he sets him out of the question; and builds a beautiful castle in the air, without being beholden either to him or his word. See your smooth-tongued Orator of Glasgow, one of the most pleasing Writers of the age. Has he any more to do with God on his system than Mr. Wollaston? Does he deduce his "Idea of Virtue," from him? As the Father of Lights, the Source of all Good? Just the contrary. He not only plans his whole theory without taking the least notice of God, but toward the close of it proposes that question, "Does the having an eye to God in an action, inhance the virtue of it?" He answers, No: it is so far from this, that if in doing a virtuous, that is a benevolent action, a man mingles with it a desire to please God, the more there is of this desire, the less virtue there is in that action. Never before did I meet with either Jew, Turk, or Heathen, who so flatly renounced God as this Christian Professor!

3. But with Heathens, Mahometans, and Jews, we have at present nothing to do: only we may wish that their lives did not shame many of us that are called Christians. We have not much more to do, with the members of the Church of Rome. But we cannot doubt that many of them, like the excellent Archbishop of Cambray, still retain, (notwithstanding many mistakes,) that faith that worketh by love. And how many of the Protestants enjoy this, whether members of the Church, or of other congregations? We have reason to believe a considerable number, both of the one and the other (and, blessed be God, an increasing number) in every part of the land.

4. Once more. I exhort you that fear God and work

righteousness, you that are *servants* of God, first, to flee from all sin, as from the face of a serpent, being,

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
The slightest touch of sin to feel;"

and to work righteousness, to the utmost of the power you now have; to abound in works both of piety and mercy: and, secondly, continually to cry to God, that he would reveal his Son in your hearts, to the intent you may be no more *servants* but *sons;* having his love shed abroad in your hearts, and walking in "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

5. I exhort you, lastly, who already feel the Spirit of God witnessing with your spirit, that you are the children of God, follow the advice of the Apostle, "Walk in all the good works whereunto ye are created in Christ Jesus." And then "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," go on to perfection. Yea, and when ye have attained a measure of perfect love, when God has circumcised your hearts, and enabled you to love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, think not of resting there. That is impossible. You cannot stand still: you must either rise or fall; rise higher or fall lower. Therefore the voice of God to the Children of Israel, to the children of God is, "Go forward." "Forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forward unto those that are before, press on to the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

SERMON CXI.

ON GOD'S VINEYARD.

ISAIAH V. 4.

"What could have been done more to my Vineyard, than I have done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes!"

THE *Vineyard of the Lord*, taking the word in its widest sense, may include the whole world. All the inhabitants of the earth, may, in some sense be called, "the Vineyard of the Lord," "who hath made all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they might seek the Lord, if haply they may feel after him, and find him." But in a narrower sense the Vineyard of the Lord may mean the Christian world: that is, all that name the name of Christ, and profess to obey his word. In a still narrower sense, it may be understood of what is termed, The Reformed part of the Christian Church. In the narrowest of all, one may, by that phrase, "The Vineyard of the Lord," mean, the body of people commonly called Methodists. In this sense I understand it now, meaning thereby that Society only, which began at Oxford, in the year 1729, and remains united at this day. Understanding the word in this sense, I repeat the question which God proposes to the Prophet, "What could have been done more to my vineyard than I

have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes!"

What could God have done more in this his vineyard, (suppose he had designed it should put forth great branches and spread over the earth,) which he hath not done in it?

I. With regard to Doctrine:
II. With regard to Scriptural Helps:
III. With regard to Discipline: And,
IV. With regard to Outward Protection.

These things being considered, I would then briefly inquire, "Wherefore, when he looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes!"

I. 1. First, What could have been done in this his vineyard, which God hath not done in it? What could have been done more, with regard to *Doctrine?* From the very beginning, from the time that four young men united together, each of them was *homo unius libri*, a man of one book: God taught them all, to make his "word a lantern unto their feet, and a light in all their paths." They had one, and only one rule of judgment, with regard to all their tempers, words, and actions, namely, the Oracles of God. They were one and all determined to be Bible-Christians. They were continually reproached for this very thing: some terming them in derision, *Bible-bigots;* others, *Bible-moths:* feeding, they said, upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth. And indeed unto this day, it is their constant endeavour to think and speak as the Oracles of God.

2. It is true, a learned man, Dr. Trap, soon after their setting out, gave a very different account of them. "When I saw, said the Doctor, these two books, *The Treatise on Christian Perfection*, and *The Serious Call to a Holy Life*, I thought these books will certainly do mischief. And so it proved; for presently after up sprung the Methodists. So he (Mr. Law) was their parent." Although this was not entirely true, yet there was some truth in it. All the Methodists carefully read these books, and were greatly profited thereby. Yet they did by no means spring from

them, but from the Holy Scriptures, being "born again," as St. Peter speaks, "by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

3. Another learned man, the late Bishop Warburton, roundly affirms, that, "They were the offspring of Mr. Law, and Count Zinzendorf together." But this was a greater mistake still. For they had met together several years before they had the least acquaintance with Count Zinzendorf, or even knew there was such a person in the world. And when they did know him, although they esteemed him very highly in love, yet they did not dare to follow him one step farther than they were warranted by the Scripture.

4. The book which, next to the Holy Scripture, was of the greatest use to them, in settling their judgment as to the grand point of Justification by Faith, was the Book of Homilies. They were never clearly convinced, that we are justified by faith alone, till they carefully consulted these, and compared them with the Sacred Writings, particularly St. Paul's epistle to the Romans. And no minister of the Church, can with any decency oppose these, seeing at his Ordination he subscribed to them, in subscribing the Thirty-sixth Article of the Church.

5. It has been frequently observed, that very few have been clear in their judgment both with regard to justification and sanctification. Many who have spoken and written admirably well, concerning justification, have had no clear conception, nay, have been totally ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification. Who has written more ably than Martin Luther, on justification by faith alone? And who has been more ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification, or more confused in his conceptions of it? In order to be thoroughly convinced of this, of his total ignorance with regard to sanctification, there needs no more than to read over, without prejudice, his celebrated comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. On the other hand, how many writers of the Romish church, (as Francis Sales and Juan de Castaniza, in particular,) have written strongly and

scripturally on sanctification; who, nevertheless, were entirely unacquainted with the nature of justification? Insomuch that the whole body of their divines at the Council of Trent, in their *Catechismus ad Parochos*, (Catechism which every parish Priest is to teach his people,) totally confound sanctification and justification together. But it has pleased God to give the Methodists a full and clear knowledge of each, and the wide difference between them.

6. They know, indeed, that at the same time a man is justified, sanctification properly begins. For when he is justified, he is "born again, born from above, born of the Spirit:" which, although it be not (as some suppose) the whole process of sanctification, is doubtless the gate of it. Of this, likewise, God has given them a full view. They know the New-Birth implies as great a change in the soul, in him that is *born of the Spirit*, as was wrought in his body, when he was born of a woman: not an outward change only, as from drunkenness to sobriety; from robbery or theft to honesty, (this is the poor, dry, miserable conceit of those, that know nothing of real religion,) but an inward change from all unholy, to all holy tempers; from pride to humility; from passionateness to meekness; from peevishness and discontent to patience and resignation: in a word, from an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

7. It is true, a late very eminent author, in his strange treatise on Regeneration, proceeds entirely on the supposition, That it is the whole gradual progress of sanctification. No; it is only the threshold of sanctification: the first entrance upon it. And as in the natural birth, a man is born at once, and then grows larger and stronger by degrees; so in the spiritual birth, a man is born at once, and then gradually increases in spiritual stature and strength. The new-birth, therefore, is the first point of sanctification, which may increase more and more unto the perfect day.

8. It is, then, a great blessing given to this people, that as they do not think or speak of justification, so as to su-

persede sanctification, so neither do they think or speak of sanctification, so as to supersede justification. They take care to keep each in its own place, laying equal stress on one and the other. They know God has joined these together, and it is not for man to put them asunder. Therefore they maintain with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification, on the one hand, and of entire sanctification both of heart and life, on the other. Being as tenacious of inward holiness, as any Mystic, and of outward, as any Pharisee.

9. Who then is a Christian, according to the light which God hath vouchsafed to this people? He that, being "justified by faith, hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and, at the same time, is "born again, born from above, born of the Spirit;" inwardly changed from the image of the devil, to that "image of God wherein he was created:" He that finds the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him, and whom this love sweetly constrains to *love his neighbour*, every man, *as himself*: He that has learned of his Lord to be meek and lowly in heart, and in every state to be content: He in whom is that whole mind, all those tempers, which were also in Christ Jesus: He that abstains from all appearances of evil in his actions, and that offends not with his tongue: He that walks in all the commandments of God, and in all his ordinances blameless: He that in all his intercourse with men does to others as he would they should do to him: and in his whole life and conversation, whether he eats or drinks, or whatsoever he doth, doth all to the glory of God.

Now what could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to *Doctrine*? We are to inquire,

II. Secondly, What could have been done which he hath not done in it, with regard to *Spiritual Helps*?

1. Let us consider that matter from the very beginning. Two young clergymen, not very remarkable any way, of middle age, having a tolerable measure of health, though

rather weak than strong, began about fifty years ago, to call sinners to repentance. This they did, for a time, in many of the churches in and about London. But two difficulties arose: first, The churches were so crowded that many of the parishioners could not get in: secondly, They preached new doctrines; that we are saved by faith, and that without holiness no man can see the Lord. For one or other of these reasons, they were not long suffered to preach in the churches. They then preached in Moorfields, Kennington-common, and in many other public places. The fruit of their preaching quickly appeared. Many sinners were changed both in heart and life. But it seemed this could not continue long; for every one clearly saw, these preachers would quickly wear themselves out; and no clergyman dared to assist them. But soon one and another, though not ordained, offered to assist them. God gave a signal blessing to their word. Many sinners were thoroughly convinced of sin, and many truly converted to God. Their assistants increased both in number and in the success of their labours. Some of them were learned, some unlearned: most of them were young: a few middle-aged: some of them were weak: some, on the contrary, of remarkably strong understanding. But it pleased God to own them all, so that more and more brands were plucked out of the burning.

2. It may be observed, that these clergymen all this time had no plan at all. They only went hither and thither, wherever they had a prospect of saving souls from death. But when more and more asked, "What must I do to be saved?" they were desired to meet all together. Twelve came the first Thursday night; forty the next: soon after, a hundred. And they continued to increase, till three or four and twenty years ago, the London Society amounted to about 2,800.

3. But how should this multitude of people be kept together? And how should it be known, Whether they walked worthy of their profession? They were providentially led, when they were thinking on another thing, namely, paying

the public debt, to divide all the people into little companies, or classes, according to their places of abode, and appoint one person in each class to see all the rest weekly. By this mean it was quickly discovered if any of them lived in any known sin. If they did, they were first admonished: and, when judged incorrigible, excluded from the Society.

4. This division of the people, and exclusion of those that walked disorderly, without any respect of persons, were helps which few other communities had. To these, as the societies increased, was soon added another. The stewards of the societies in each district, were desired to meet the preachers once a quarter in some central place, to give an account of the spiritual and temporal state of their several societies. The use of these quarterly meetings was soon found to be exceedingly great; in consideration of which they were gradually spread to all the societies in the kingdom.

5. In order to increase the union between the preachers, as well as that of the people, they were desired to meet all together in London, and, some time after, a select number of them. Afterwards, for more convenience, they met at London, Bristol, and Leeds, alternately. They spent a few days together in this General Conference: in considering, what might most conduce to the general good. The result was immediately signified to all their brethren. And they soon found, that what St. Paul observes of the whole Church, may be, in a measure, applied to every part of it, "The whole body being fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love," Eph. iv. 16.

6. That this may be the more effectually done, they have another excellent help, in the constant change of preachers: it being their rule, that no preacher shall remain in the same circuit more than two years together: and few of them more than one year. Some, indeed, have imagined, that this was a hindrance to the work of God. But long experience in every part of the kingdom proves the contrary.

This has always shewn, that the people profit less by any one person than by a variety of preachers: while they

"Use the gifts on each bestow'd,
Temper'd by the art of God."

7. Together with these helps, which are peculiar to their own Society, they have all those which are enjoyed in common by the other members of the Church of England. Indeed they have been long pressed to separate from it, to which they have had temptations of every kind. But they cannot, they dare not, they will not separate from it, while they can remain therein with a clear conscience. It is true, if any sinful terms of communion were imposed upon them, then they would be constrained to separate; but as this is not the case at present, we rejoice to continue therein.

8. What then could God have done more for his vineyard, which he hath not done in it, with regard to spiritual helps? He has hardly dealt so with any other people in the Christian world! If it be said, He could have made them a separate people, like the Moravian brethren: I answer, This would have been a direct contradiction to his whole design in raising them up: namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination, leaving every one to hold his own opinions, and to follow his own mode of worship. This could only be done effectually, by leaving these things as they were, and endeavouring to leaven the whole nation with that *faith that worketh by love*.

III. 1. Such are the *spiritual helps* which God has bestowed on this his vineyard, with no sparing hand. *Discipline* might be inserted among these; but we may as well speak of it under a separate head. It is certain, that in this respect the Methodists are a highly favoured people. Nothing can be more simple, nothing more rational, than the Methodist discipline: it is entirely founded on common sense, particularly applying the general rules of Scripture. Any person determined to save his soul, may be united (this is the only condition required) with them. But this desire must be evidenced by three marks: avoiding all

known sin; doing good after his power; and attending all the ordinances of God. He is then placed in such a class as is convenient for him, where he spends about an hour in a week. And the next quarter, if nothing be objected to him, he is admitted into the Society. And therein he may continue, as long as he continue to meet his brethren, and walk according to his profession.

2. Their public service is at five in the morning, and six or seven in the evening, that their temporal business may not be hindered. Only on Sunday it begins between nine and ten, and concludes with the Lord's supper. On Sunday evening the society meets; but care is taken to dismiss them early, that all the heads of families may have time to instruct their several households. Once a quarter the principal preacher in every circuit examines every member of the societies therein. By this mean, if the behaviour of any one is blamable, which is frequently to be expected in so numerous a body of people, it is easily discovered, and either the offence or the offender is removed in time.

3. Whenever it is needful to exclude any disorderly member out of the society, it is done in the most quiet and inoffensive manner; only by not renewing his ticket, at the quarterly visitation. But in some cases, where the offence is great, and there is danger of public scandal, it is judged necessary to declare, when all the members are present, "A. B. is no longer a member of our Society." Now what can be more rational or more scriptural, than this simple discipline; attended from the beginning to the end with no trouble, expense, or delay?

IV. 1. But was it possible that all these things should be done, without a flood of opposition? The prince of this world was not dead, nor asleep: and would he not fight, that his kingdom might not be delivered up? If the word of the Apostle is found true, in all ages and nations, "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;" if this is true with regard to every individual Christian, how much more, with regard to bodies of men, [illegible]ited together, with the avowed design, to over-

throw his kingdom! And what could withstand the persecution he would not fail to stir up, against a poor, defenceless, despised people, without any visible help, without money, without power, without friends?

2. In truth the god of this world was not asleep. Neither was he idle: he *did* fight, and that with all his power, that his kingdom might not be delivered up. He "brought forth all his hosts to war." First, he stirred up the beasts of the people. They roared like lions: they encompassed the little and defenceless on every side. And the storm rose higher and higher, till deliverance came, in a way that none expected. God stirred up the heart of our late gracious Sovereign, to give such orders to his Magistrates, as being put in execution, effectually quelled the madness of the people. It was about the same time that a great man applied personally to his Majesty, begging that he would please to "take a course to stop these run-about preachers." His Majesty, looking sternly upon him, answered without ceremony, like a king, "I tell you, while I sit on the throne, no man shall be persecuted for conscience' sake."

3. But in defiance of this, several who bore his Majesty's commission, have persecuted them from time to time; and that under colour of law, availing themselves of what is called the Conventicle Act: one in particular, in Kent, who some years since took upon him to fine one of the preachers and several of his hearers. But they thought it their duty to appeal to his Majesty's Court of King's Bench. The cause was given for the plaintiffs, who have ever since been permitted to worship God according to their own consciences.

4. I believe this is a thing wholly without precedent: I find no other instance of it, in any age of the church from the day of Pentecost, to this day. Every opinion right and wrong, has been tolerated, almost in every age and nation. Every mode of worship has been tolerated, however superstitious or absurd. But I do not know that true, vital, scriptural religion was ever tolerated before. For this the

people called Methodists, have abundant reason to praise God. In their favour, he hath wrought a new thing in the earth: he hath stilled the enemy and the avenger. This then they must ascribe unto Him, the Author of their outward as well as inward peace.

V. 1. What indeed could God have done more for this his vineyard, which he hath not done in it? This having been largely shewed, we may now proceed to that strong and tender expostulation. After all that I have done, might I not have looked for the most excellent grapes; wherefore, then, brought it forth wild grapes! Might I not have expected a general increase of faith and love, of righteousness and true holiness; yea, and of the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance? Was it not reasonable to expect that these fruits would have overspread his whole Church? Truly when I saw what God had done among his people between forty and fifty years ago, when I saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in God their Saviour, I could expect nothing less than that all these would have lived like angels here below: that they would have walked as continually seeing him that is invisible, having constant communion with the Father and the Son, living in eternity and walking in eternity. I looked to see "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," in the whole tenor of their conversation "shewing forth his praise, who had called them into his marvellous light."

2. But instead of this it brought forth wild grapes! fruit of a quite contrary nature. It brought forth error in ten thousand shapes, turning many of the simple out of the way! It brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspiration, ascribing to the all-wise God, all the wild, absurd, self-inconsistent dreams of a heated imagination! It brought forth pride, robbing the Giver of every good gift of the honour due to his name! It brought forth prejudice, evil-surmising, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another: all

totally subversive of that brotherly love, which is the very badge of the Christian profession: without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God! It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil word and work: all direful fruits, not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit!

3. It brought forth likewise in many, particularly those that are increased in goods, that grand poison of souls, the love of the world, and that in all its branches: "the desire of the flesh," that is, the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense: "the desire of the eyes," that is, seeking happiness in dress, or any of the pleasures of imagination: and "the pride of life," that is, seeking happiness in the praise of men; or in that which ministers to all these, laying up treasures on earth. It brought forth self-indulgence of every kind, delicacy, effeminacy, softness: but not softness of the right kind, that melts at human woe. It brought such base groveling affections, such deep earthly-mindedness, as that of the poor heathens, which occasioned the lamentation of their own Poet over them, *O curvæ in terras animæ et cœlestium inanes!* O souls bowed down to earth and void of God!

4. O ye that have riches in possession, once more hear the Word of the Lord! Ye that are rich in this world, that have food to eat, and raiment to put on, and something over, are you clear of the curse, of loving the world? Are you sensible of your danger? Do you feel, How hardly will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven? Do you continue unburned in the midst of the fire? Are you untouched with the love of the world? Are you clear from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life? Do you *put a knife to your throat* when you sit down to meat, lest your *table* should *be a snare to you?* Is not your belly your god? Is not eating and drinking, or any other pleasure of sense the greatest pleasure you enjoy? Do not you seek happiness in dress, furniture, pictures, gardens: or any thing else that pleases the eye? Do not you grow soft and delicate?

Unable to bear cold, heat, the wind or the rain, as you did when you were poor? Are you not increasing in goods, laying up treasures on earth: instead of restoring to God in the poor, not so much, or so much, but all that you can spare? Surely "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

5. But why will ye still bring forth wild grapes? What excuse can ye make? Hath God been wanting on *his* part? Have ye not been warned over and over? Have ye not been fed with the sincere milk of the word? Hath not the whole word of God been delivered to you, and without any mixture of error? Were not the fundamental doctrines both of free, full, present justification delivered to you, as well as sanctification, both gradual and instantaneous? Was not every branch both of inward and outward holiness clearly opened and earnestly applied, and that by preachers of every kind, young and old, learned and unlearned? But it is well if some of you did not despise the helps which God had prepared for you. Perhaps you would hear none but Clergymen; or, at least, none but men of learning. Will you not then give God leave to choose his own messengers? To send by whom he *will* send? It is well if this bad wisdom was not one cause of your *bringing forth wild grapes.*

6. Was not another cause of it your despising that excellent help, union with a Christian Society? Have you not read, "How can one be warm alone;" and, "Woe be unto him that is alone when he falleth?" "But you have companions enow." Perhaps more than enow; more than are helpful to your soul: but have you enow that are athirst for God, and that labour to make *you* so? Have you companions enow, that watch over your soul, as they that must give account; and that freely and faithfully warn you, if you take any false step, or are in danger of doing so? I fear, you have few of these companions, or else you would bring forth better fruit.

7. If you be a member of the Society, do you make a

full use of your privilege? Do you never fail to meet your class; and that not as a matter of form, but expecting that when you are met together in his Name, your Lord will be in the midst of you? Are you truly thankful for the amazing liberty of conscience, which is vouchsafed to you and your brethren: such as never was enjoyed before, by persons in your circumstances? And are you thankful to the Giver of every good gift, for the general spread of true religion? Surely you can never praise God enough for all these blessings, so plentifully showered down upon you, till you praise him with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

SERMON CXII.

ON RICHES.

MATTHEW XIX. 24.

"It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of GOD."

1. IN the preceding verses we have an account of a *young man*, who *came running* to our Lord, *and kneeling down*, not in hypocrisy, but in deep earnestness of soul, and said unto him, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" "All the commandments," saith he, "I have kept from my youth: what lack I yet?" Probably he had kept them in the literal sense; yet he still loved the world. And he who knew what was in man, knew that, in this particular case, (for this is by no means a general rule,) he could not be healed of that desperate disease, but by a desperate remedy. Therefore he answered, "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and come and follow me. But when he heard this, he went away sorrowing, for he had great possessions." So all the fair blossoms withered away! For he would not lay up treasure in heaven at so high a price! Jesus, observing this, "looked round about and said unto his disciples," Mark x. 23, &c. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a

camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God! And they were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved?" if it is so difficult for rich men to be saved, who have so many and so great advantages, who are free from the cares of this world, and a thousand difficulties, to which the Poor are continually exposed!

2. It has indeed been supposed he partly retracts what he had said concerning the difficulty of rich men's being saved, by what is added in the tenth chapter of St. Mark. For after he had said, ver. 24, "How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of God!" when *the disciples were astonished at his words, Jesus* answered again and said unto them, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" ver. 24. But observe, 1, Our Lord did not mean hereby, to retract what he had said before. So far from it that he immediately confirms it, by that awful declaration, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Observe, 2, Both one of these sentences and the other assert the very same thing. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for those that *have riches* not to *trust* in them.

3. Perceiving their astonishment at this hard saying, "Jesus looked upon them," undoubtedly with an air of inexpressible tenderness, to prevent their thinking the case of the rich desperate, and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

4. I apprehend, by a rich man here is meant, not only a man that has immense treasures, one that has heaped up gold as dust, and silver as the sand of the sea: but any one that possesses more than the necessaries and conveniences of life. One that has food and raiment sufficient for himself and his family, and something over, is rich. By the kingdom of God, or of heaven, exactly equivalent terms, I believe is meant, not the kingdom of glory, although that will without question follow, but the kingdom of heaven, that is, true religion upon earth. The meaning

then of our Lord's assertion is this, That it is absolutely impossible, unless by that power to which all things are possible, that a rich man should be a Christian, should have the mind that was in Christ, and walk as Christ walked. Such are the hindrances to holiness, as well as the temptations to sin, which surround him on every side.

I. First, Such are the hindrances to holiness, which surround him on every side. To enumerate all these would require a large volume: I would only touch upon a few of them.

1. The root of all religion is *Faith*, without which it is impossible to please God. Now whether you take this in its general acceptation, for *an Evidence of things not seen*, of the invisible and the eternal world, of God and the things of God: how natural a tendency have riches to darken this evidence, to prevent your attention to God and the things of God, and to things invisible and eternal! And if you take it in another sense, for a *Confidence*, what a tendency have riches to destroy this; to make you trust, either for happiness or defence, in themselves, not *in the living God!* Or if you take faith in the proper Christian sense, as a *divine Confidence* in a pardoning God, what a deadly, what an almost insuperable hindrance to this faith are riches! What, can a wealthy, and consequently an honourable man, come to God, as having nothing to pay? Can he lay all his greatness by, and come as a sinner, a mere sinner, the vilest of sinners; as on a level with those that feed the dogs of his flock; with that *beggar* who *lies at his gate full of sores?* Impossible, unless by the same power that made the heavens and the earth. Yet without doing this, he cannot in any sense *enter into the kingdom of God.*

2. What a hindrance are riches to the very first fruit of faith, namely, the Love of God! "If any man love the world," says the Apostle, "the love of the Father is not in him." But how is it possible for a man not to love the world, who is surrounded with all its allurements! How can it be, that he should then hear the still small voice, which

says, "My son, give me thy heart?" What power less than Almighty, can send the rich man an answer to that prayer,

"Keep me dead to all below,
Only Christ resolv'd to know:
Firm, and disengag'd, and free,
Seeking all my bliss in Thee!"

3. Riches are equally a hindrance to the loving our neighbour as ourselves, that is, to the loving all mankind, as Christ loved us. A rich man may indeed love them that are of his own party, or his own opinion. He may love them that love him: "Do not even Heathens," baptized or unbaptized, "the same?" But he cannot have pure, disinterested good-will to every child of man. This can only spring from the love of God, which his great possessions expelled from his soul.

4. From the love of God, and from no other fountain, true humility likewise flows. Therefore so far as they hinder the love of God, riches must hinder humility likewise. They hinder this also in the rich, by cutting them off from that freedom of conversation, whereby they might be made sensible of their defects, and come to a true knowledge of themselves. But how seldom do they meet with a faithful friend: with one that can and will deal plainly with them! And without this, we are likely to grow grey in our faults; yea, to die "with all our imperfections on our head."

5. Neither can meekness subsist without humility; for *of pride* naturally *cometh contention.* Our Lord accordingly directs us to learn of Him at the same time "to be meek and lowly in heart." Riches therefore are as great a hindrance to meekness as they are to humility: in preventing lowliness of mind, they of consequence prevent meekness, which increases in the same proportion as we sink in our own esteem; and, on the contrary, necessarily decreases as we think more highly of ourselves.

6. There is another Christian temper which is nearly allied to meekness and humility. But it has hardly a name. St. Paul terms it επιεικια. Perhaps till we find a better

name, we may call it *yieldingness;* a readiness to submit to others, to give up our own will. This seems to be the quality which St. James ascribes to "the wisdom from above," when he styles it εὐπειθής, which we render *easy to be entreated; easy to be convinced* of what is true; *easy to be persuaded.* But how rarely is this amiable temper to be found in a wealthy man! I do not know that I have found such a prodigy ten times, in above threescore and ten years.

7. And how uncommon a thing is it, to find patience in those that have large possessions! Unless when there is a counterbalance of long and severe affliction, with which God is frequently pleased to visit those he loves, as an antidote to their riches. This is not uncommon: he often sends pains, and sickness, and great crosses, to them that have great possessions. By these means "patience has its perfect work, till they ar eperfect and entire, lacking nothing."

II. Such are some of the hindrances to Holiness, which surround the rich on every side! We may now observe, on the other side, what a temptation riches are, to all unholy tempers.

1. And, first, how great is the temptation to Atheism, which naturally flows from riches; even to an entire forgetfulness of God, as if there was no such Being in the universe! This is at present usually termed *dissipation,* a pretty name, affixed by the great Vulgar, to an utter disregard for God, and indeed for the whole invisible world. And how is the rich man surrounded with all manner of temptations to continual dissipation! Yes, how is the art of dissipation studied among the rich and great! As Prior keenly says,

> "Cards are dealt, and dice are brought,
> Happy effects of human wit,
> That Alma may herself forget."

Say rather, "that mortals may their God forget;" that they may keep him utterly out of their thoughts, who tho' he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, yet is "about their bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways."

Call this wit, if you please; but is it wisdom? O no! It is far, very far from it! Thou fool, dost thou imagine, because thou dost not see God, that God doth not see thee? Laugh on: Play on: Sing on: Dance on: But "for all these things God will bring thee to judgment!"

2. From Atheism there is an easy transition to idolatry: from the worship of no God to the worship of false gods: and, in fact, he that does not love God, (which is his proper and his only proper worship,) will surely love some of the works of his hands; will love the creature if not the Creator. But to how many species of Idolatry is every rich man exposed! What continual and almost insuperable temptations is he under to "love the world," and that in all its branches! "The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." What innumerable temptations will he find, to gratify the *desire of the flesh!* Understand this rightly. It does not refer to one only, but all the outward senses. It is equal idolatry, to seek our happiness in gratifying any or all of these. But there is the greatest danger, lest men should seek it in gratifying their taste; in a moderate sensuality; in a regular kind of epicurism: not in gluttony, or drunkenness: far be that from them! They do not disorder the body; they only keep the soul dead; dead to God and all true religion.

3. The rich are equally surrounded with temptations from the *desire of the eyes*, that is, the seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination, the pleasures of which the eyes chiefly minister. The objects that give pleasure to the imagination are grand, or beautiful, or new. Indeed all rich men have not a taste for grand objects: but they have for new and beautiful things; especially for new: the desire of novelty being as natural to men, as the desire of meat and drink. Now how numerous are the temptations to this kind of idolatry, which naturally springs from riches! How strongly and continually are they solicited to happiness (if not in grand, yet) in beautiful houses, in elegant furniture, in curious pictures, in delightful gardens! Perhaps in that trifle of all trifles, rich or gay apparel!

Yea, in every new thing, little or great, which Fashion, the mistress of fools, recommends! How are rich men, of a more elevated turn of mind, tempted to seek happiness, as their various tastes lead, in poetry, history, music, philosophy, or curious arts and sciences! Now although it is certain all these have their use, and therefore may be innocently pursued, yet the seeking happiness in any of them instead of God, is manifest idolatry. And therefore were it only on this account, that riche sfurnish him with the means of indulging all these desires; it might well be asked, "Is not the life of a" rich "man" (above all others) "a temptation upon earth?"

4. What temptation likewise must every rich man have, to seek happiness in *the pride of life!* I do not conceive the Apostle to mean thereby pomp, or state, or equipage: so much as "the honour that cometh of men," whether it be deserved or not. A rich man is sure to meet with this; it is a snare he cannot escape. The whole city of London uses the words *rich* and *good* as equivalent terms. "Yes," say they, "He is a good man; he is worth a hundred thousand pounds." And indeed every where, *if thou dost well unto thyself, if thou* increasest in goods, *men will speak well of thee.* All the world is agreed

——"A thousand pound supplies
The want of twenty thousand qualities."

And who can bear general applause, without being puffed up; without being insensibly induced to think of himself "more highly than he ought to think."

5. How is it possible that a rich man should escape pride, were it only on this account, that his situation necessarily occasions praise to flow in upon him from every quarter. For praise is generally poison to the soul; and the more pleasing, the more fatal; particularly when it is undeserved: So that well might our Poet say,

"Parent of evil, bane of honest deeds,
Pernicious flattery! Thy destructive seeds,
In an ill hour, and by a fatal hand
Sadly diffus'd o'er virtue's gleby land,

With rising pride amid the corn appear,
And check the hope and promise of the year!"

And not only praise, whether deserved or undeserved, but every thing about him tends to inspire and increase pride. His noble house, his elegant furniture, his well-chosen pictures, his fine horses, his equipage, his very dress, yea, even "the embroidery plaistered on his tail," all these will be matter of commendation to some or other of his guests, and so have an almost irresistible tendency to make him think himself a better man, than those who have not these advantages.

6. How naturally, likewise, do riches feed and increase the *self-will* which is born in every child of man! As not only his domestic servants and immediate dependants, are governed implicitly by his will, finding their account therein, but also most of his neighbours and acquaintance study to oblige him in all things: so his will being continually indulged, will, of course, be continually strengthened, till at length he will be ill able to submit to the will either of God or men.

7. Such a tendency have riches to beget and nourish every temper that is contrary to the love of God. And they have equal tendency to feed every passion and temper, that is contrary to the love of our neighbour: *contempt*, for instance, particularly of inferiors, than which nothing is more contrary to love. *Resentment* of any real or supposed offence; perhaps even *revenge*, although God claims this as his own peculiar prerogative: at least *anger:* for it immediately rises in the mind of a rich man, "What! to use *me* thus! Nay, but he shall soon know better: I am now able to do myself justice."

8. Nearly related to anger, if not rather a species of it, are *fretfulness* and *peevishness*. But are the rich more assaulted by these than the poor? All experience shows that they are; one remarkable instance I was witness of many years ago. A gentleman of large fortune, while we were seriously conversing, ordered a servant to throw some coals on the fire; a puff of smoke came out; he threw him-

self back in his chair and cried out, "O, Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses which I meet with every day!" I could not help asking, "Pray, Sir John, are these the heaviest crosses you meet with?" Surely these crosses would not have fretted him so much, if he had had only fifty pounds a year instead of five thousand!

9. But it would not be strange if rich men were in general void of all good dispositions, and an easy prey to all evil ones, since so few of them pay any regard to that solemn declaration of our Lord, without observing which we cannot be his disciples. "And he said unto them all," the whole multitude, not unto his Apostles only, "If any man will come after me," will be a real Christian, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," Luke ix. 23. O how hard a saying is this, to those that are at ease "in the midst of their possessions!" Yet the Scripture cannot be broken. Therefore, unless a man do *deny himself* every pleasure which does not prepare him for taking pleasure in God, *and take up his cross daily;* obey every command of God, however grievous to flesh and blood, he cannot be a disciple of Christ, he cannot *enter into the kingdom of God.*

10. Touching this important point, of *denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily*, let us appeal to matter of fact: let us appeal to every man's conscience in the sight of God. How many rich men are there among the Methodists, (observe, there was not one, when they were first joined together,) who actually do "deny themselves and take up their cross daily?" Who resolutely abstain from every pleasure, either of sense or imagination, unless they know by experience, that it prepares them for taking pleasure in God? Who decline no cross, no labour or pain, which lies in the way of their duty? Who of you that are now rich, deny yourselves just as you did when you were poor? Who as willingly endure labour or pain now, as you did when you were not worth five pounds? Come to particulars. Do you fast now as often as you did then? Do you rise as early in the morning? Do you endure cold or

heat, wind or rain, as cheerfully as ever? See one reason among many, why so few increase in goods, without decreasing in grace! Because they no longer deny themselves and take up their daily cross. They no longer, alas! endure hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ!

11. "Go to now, ye rich men! Weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you:" that must come upon you in a few days unless prevented by a deep and entire change! *The canker of your gold and silver* will be *a testimony against* you, and will *eat your flesh as fire.* O how pitiable is your condition! And who is able to help you? You need more plain dealing than any men in the world. And you meet with less. For how few dare speak as plain to *you*, as they would do to one of your servants! No man living, that either hopes to gain any thing by your favour, or fears to lose any thing by your displeasure. O that God would give me acceptable words, and cause them to sink deep into your hearts! Many of you have known me long, well nigh from your infancy: You have frequently helped me, when I stood in need. May I not say you loved me? But now the time of our parting is at hand: my feet are just stumbling upon the dark mountains. I would leave one word with you, before I go hence; and you may remember it, when I am no more seen.

12. O let your heart be whole with God! Seek your happiness in him and him alone. Beware that you cleave not to the dust! *This* earth *is not your place.* See that you use this world as not abusing it: *use* the world, and *enjoy* God. Sit as loosely to all things here below, as if you were a poor beggar. Be a good steward of the manifold gifts of God, that when you are called to give an account of your stewardship, he may say, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

SERMON CXIII.

ON, WHAT IS MAN?

PSALM VIII. 4.

"*WHAT IS MAN?*"

1. NAY, what am I? With God's assistance I would consider myself. Here is a curious machine, "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is a little portion of *earth*, the particles of which cohering, I know not how, lengthen into innumerable fibres, a thousand times finer than hairs. These crossing each other in all directions, are strangely wrought into membranes; and these membranes are as strangely wrought into arteries, veins, nerves, and glands; all of which contain various fluids, constantly circulating through the whole machine.

2. In order to the continuance of this circulation, a considerable quantity of *air* is necessary. And this is continually taken into the habit, by an engine fitted for that very purpose. But as a particle of ethereal *fire* is connected with every particle of air, (and a particle of water too,) so both air, water, and fire, are received into the lungs together, where the fire is separated from the air and water, both of which are continually thrown out, while the fire extracted from them, is received into, and mingled with the blood. Thus the human body is composed of all the four elements, duly proportioned and mixed together: the last

of which constitutes the vital flame, whence flows the animal heat.

3. Let me consider this yet a little farther. Is not the primary use of the lungs to administer fire to the body, which is continually extracted from the air, by that curious fire-pump? By inspiration it takes in the air, water, and fire together. In its numerous cells, (commonly called air-vessels,) it detaches the fire from the air and water. This then mixes with the blood, as every air-vessel has a blood-vessel connected with it: And as soon as the fire is extracted from it, the air and water are thrown out by expiration.

4. Without this spring of life, this vital fire, there could be no circulation of the blood: Consequently no motion of any of the fluids, of the nervous fluid in particular: (If it be not rather, as highly probable, this very fire we are speaking of.) Therefore there could not be any sensation; nor any muscular motion: I say there could be no circulation; for the cause usually assigned for this, namely, the force of the heart, is altogether inadequate to the supposed effect. No one supposes the force of the heart in a strong man to be more than equal to the weight of three thousand pounds. Whereas it would require a force equal to the weight of a hundred thousand pounds, to propel the blood from the heart through all the arteries. This can only be effected by the ethereal fire contained in the blood itself, assisted by the elastic force of the arteries through which it circulates.

5. But beside this strange compound of the four elements, earth, water, air, and fire, I find something in me of a quite different nature, nothing akin to any of these. I find something in me that *thinks*, which neither earth, water, air, fire, nor any mixture of them, can possibly do: Something which sees, and hears, and smells, and tastes, and feels, all which are so many modes of thinking: it goes farther; having perceived objects by any of these senses, it forms inward ideas of them: it *judges* concerning them, it

sees whether they agree or disagree with each other: it *reasons* concerning them, that is, infers one proposition from another: it reflects upon its own operations: it is endued with imagination and memory: and any of its operations, judgment in particular, may be subdivided into many others.

6. But by what means shall I learn in what part of my body this thinking principle is lodged? Some eminent men have affirmed, That it is "all in all, and all in every part." But I learn nothing from this: they seem to be words that have no determinate meaning. Let us then appeal, in the best manner we can, to our own experience. From this I learn, that this thinking principle is not lodged in my hands, or feet, or legs, or arms. It is not lodged in the trunk of my body. Any one may be assured of this by a little reflection. I cannot conceive that it is situated in my bones, or in any part of my flesh. So far as I can judge, it seems to be situated in some part of my head; but whether in the pineal gland, or in any part of the brain, I am not able to determine.

7. But farther: this inward principle, wherever it is lodged, is capable not only of thinking, but likewise of love, hatred, joy, sorrow, desire, fear, hope, &c. and a whole train of other inward emotions, which are commonly called *Passions* or *Affections*. They are styled, by a general appellation, *the Will*, and are mixed and diversified a thousand ways. And they seem to be the only spring of action, in that inward principle I call *the Soul*.

8. But what is my *Soul?* It is an important question, and not easily to be resolved.

"Hear'st thou submissive, but a lowly birth?
Some separate particles of finer earth?
A plain effect, which nature must beget,
As motion dictates, and as atoms meet?"

I cannot in any wise believe this. My reason recoils at it. I cannot reconcile myself to the thought, that the soul is [illegible] earth, water, or fire: or a composition of all of them

put together; were it only for this plain reason:—all these, whether separate or compounded in any possible way, are purely *passive* still. None of them has the least power of self-motion; none of them can move itself. "But (says one) does not that ship move?" Yes, but not of itself; it is moved by the water on which it swims. "But then the water moves." True, but the water is moved by the wind, the current of air. "But the air moves." It is moved by the ethereal fire, which is attached to every particle of it; and this fire itself is moved by the Almighty Spirit, the source of all the motion in the universe. But my soul has from Him an inward principle of motion, whereby it governs at pleasure every part of the body.

9. It governs every motion of the body: only with this exception, which is a marvellous instance of the wise and gracious Providence of the great Creator. There are some motions of the body, which are absolutely necessary for the continuance of life: Such as the dilation and contraction of the lungs; the systole and diastole of the heart; the pulsation of the arteries, and the circulation of the blood. These are not governed by me at pleasure: They do not wait the direction of my will; and it is well they do not. It is highly proper, that all the vital motions should be involuntary, going on, whether we advert to them or not. Were it otherwise, grievous inconveniences might follow. A man might put an end to his own life whenever he pleased, by suspending the motion of his heart, or of his lungs: Or he might lose his life by mere inattention, by not remembering, not adverting to the circulation of his blood. But these vital motions being excepted, I direct the motion of my whole body. By a single act of my will, I put my head, eyes, hands, or any part of my body into motion: Although I no more comprehend how I do this, than I can comprehend how the "THREE, that bear record in heaven, are ONE."

10. But what am *I*? Unquestionably I am something distinct from my body. It seems evident that my body is

not necessarily included therein. For when my body dies, I shall not die; I shall exist as really as I did before. And I cannot but believe, this self-moving, thinking principle, with all its passions and affections, will continue to exist, although the body be mouldered into dust. Indeed at present this body is so intimately connected with the soul, that I seem to consist of both. In my present state of existence, I undoubtedly consist both of soul and body. And so I shall again after the resurrection to all eternity.

11. I am conscious to myself of one more property, commonly called *Liberty*. This is very frequently confounded with the *Will;* but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul, capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul, as well as all the motions of the body. It is a power of self determination, which although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions. I am fully as certain of this, that I am free, with respect to these, to speak or not to speak, to act or not to act, to do this or the contrary, as I am of my own existence. I have not only what is termed, a *liberty of contradiction*, a power to do or not to do, but what is termed, a *liberty of contrariety*, a power to act one way, or the contrary: To deny this would be to deny the constant experience of all human kind. Every one feels that he has an inherent power, to move this or that part of his body, to move it or not, and to move this way or the contrary, just as he pleases. I can, as I choose, (and so can every one that is born of a woman,) open or shut my eyes, speak or be silent, rise or sit down, stretch out my hand, or draw it in, and use any of my limbs according to my pleasure, as well as my whole body. And although I have not an absolute power over my own mind, because of the corruption of my nature, yet, through the grace of God assisting me, I have a power to choose and do good, as well as evil. [illegible] to choose whom I will serve, and if I choose the [illegible] to continue therein even unto death.

12. "But tell me, frighted nature, What is death?
Blood only stopt, and interrupted breath?
The utmost limit of a narrow span?
And end of motion, which with life began?"

Death is properly the separation of the soul from the body. Of this we are certain: But we are not certain, (at least in many cases,) of the time when this separation is made. Is it when respiration ceases, according to the well-known maxim, *Nullus spiritus, nulla vita:* "Where there is no breath, there is no life?" Nay, we cannot absolutely affirm this: For many instances have been known, of those whose breath was totally lost, and yet their lives have been recovered. Is it when the heart no longer beats? Or when the circulation of the blood ceases? Not so. For the heart may beat anew; and the circulation of the blood, after it is quite interrupted, may begin again. Is the soul separated from the body, when the whole body is stiff and cold as a piece of ice? But there have been several instances, lately, of persons who were thus cold and stiff, and had no symptoms of life remaining, who, nevertheless, upon proper application, recovered both life and health. Therefore we can say no more, than that death is the separation of the soul and body; but in many cases God only can tell the moment of that separation.

13. But what we are much more concerned to know, and deeply to consider is, the end of life: For what end is life bestowed upon the children of men? Why were we sent into the world? For one sole end, and for no other, To prepare for eternity. For this alone we live: For this, and no other purpose, is our life either given or continued. It pleased the all-wise God, at the season which he saw best, to arise in the greatness of his strength, and create the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein. Having prepared all things for him, "He created man in his own image, after his own likeness." And what was the end of his creation? It was one, and no other—That he might know, and love, and enjoy, and serve his great Creator to all eternity.

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14. But "man, being in honour continued not: but became lower than even the beasts that perish." He wilfully and openly rebelled against God, and cast off his allegiance to the Majesty of Heaven. Hereby he instantly lost both the favour of God and the image of God, wherein he was created. As he was then incapable of obtaining happiness by the Old, God established a New Covenant with man: the terms of which were no longer, "Do this and live," but, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." But still the end of man is one and the same; only it stands on another foundation. For the plain tenor of it is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath given to be the propitiation for thy sins, and thou shalt be saved:" first, from the guilt of sin, having redemption through his blood; then from the power, which shall have no more dominion over thee; and then from the root of it, into the whole image of God. And being restored both to the favour and image of God, thou shalt know, love, and serve him, to all eternity. So that still the end of his life, the life of every man born into the world, is to know, love, and serve his great Creator.

15. And let it be observed, as this is the end, so it is the whole and sole end, for which every man upon the face of the earth, for which every one of *you* were brought into the world, and indued with a living soul. Remember! You were born for nothing else. You live for nothing else. Your life is continued to you upon earth, for no other purpose than this, that you may know, love, and serve God on earth, and enjoy him to all eternity. Consider! You were not created to please your senses, to gratify your imagination, to gain money, or the praise of men; to seek happiness in any created good, in any thing under the sun. All this is "walking in a vain shadow:" it is leading a restless, miserable life, in order to a miserable eternity. On the contrary, you were created for this, and for no other purpose, by seeking and finding happiness in God on earth, to secure the glory of God in heaven. Therefore, let your heart continually

say, "This one thing I do." Having one thing in view, remembering why I was born, and why I am continued in life, "I press on to the mark." I aim at the one end of my being, God: even at "God in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He shall be my God for ever and ever, and my guide even unto death.

BRADFORTH, *May* 2, 1788.

SERMON CXIV.

ON THE DISCOVERIES OF FAITH.

HEBREWS XI. 1.

"*Now Faith is the Evidence of Things not seen.*"

1. FOR many ages it has been allowed by sensible men, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu:* that is, "There is nothing in the understanding which was not first perceived by some of the senses." All the knowledge which we naturally have, is originally derived from our senses. And therefore those that want any sense, cannot have the least knowledge or idea of the objects of that sense: as they that never had sight, have not the least knowledge or conception of light or colours. Some indeed have, of late years, endeavoured to prove, that we have *innate ideas*, not derived from any of the senses, but co-eval with the understanding. But this point has been now thorougly discussed, by men of the most eminent sense and learning. And it is agreed by all impartial persons, that although some things are so plain and obvious, that we can hardly avoid knowing them, as soon as we come to the use of our understanding, yet the knowledge even of these is not innate, but derived from some of our senses.

2. But there is a great difference between our senses, considered as the avenues of our knowledge. Some of them have a very narrow sphere of action: some a more

extensive one. By *feeling* we discern only those objects that touch some part of our body; and, consequently, this sense extends only to a small number of objects. Our senses of *taste* and *smell* (which some count species of *feeling*) extend to fewer still. But, on the other hand, our nobler sense of *hearing* has an exceedingly wide sphere of action; especially in the case of loud sounds, as thunder, the roaring of the sea, or the discharge of cannon: the last of which sounds has been frequently heard at the distance of nearly a hundred miles. Yet the space to which the sense of *hearing* itself extends is small, compared to that through which the *sight* extends. The *sight* takes in at one view, not only the most unbounded prospects on earth, but also the moon and the other planets, the sun, yea, the fixed stars, though at such an immeasurable distance, that they appear no larger through our finest telescopes than they do to the naked eye.

3. But still none of our senses, no, not the sight itself, can reach beyond the bounds of this visible world. They supply us with such knowledge of the material world, as answers all the purposes of life. But as this was the design for which they were given, beyond this they cannot go. They furnish us with no information at all concerning the *invisible world*.

4. But the wise and gracious Governor of the worlds, both visible and invisible, has prepared a remedy for this defect. He hath appointed *faith* to supply the defect of sense; to take us up where sense sets us down, and help us over the great gulf. Its office begins where that of sense ends. Sense is an evidence of things that are seen: of the visible, the material world, and the several parts of it. Faith, on the other hand, is the "evidence of things not seen," of the *invisible world*: of all those invisible things which are revealed in the Oracles of God. But, indeed, they reveal nothing, they are a mere *dead letter*, if they are "not mixed with faith in those that hear them."

5. In particular: Faith is an evidence to me of the existence of that unseen thing, my own soul. Without this I

should be in utter uncertainty concerning it. I should be constrained to ask that melancholy question,

"Hear'st thou submissive, but a lowly birth?
Some separate particles of finer earth?"

But by Faith, I know it is an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, in his natural and moral image, "an incorruptible picture of the God of glory." By the same evidence I know that I am now fallen short of the glorious image of God: yea, that I, as well as all mankind, am "dead in trespasses and sins." So utterly dead, that "in me dwelleth no good thing;" that I am inclined to all evil, and totally unable to quicken my own soul.

6. By Faith I know, that besides the souls of men, there are other orders of spirits: yea, I believe that

—"Millions of creatures walk the earth
Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

These I term *angels*, and I believe part of them are holy and happy, and the other part wicked and miserable. I believe the former of these, the good angels, are continually sent of God, "to minister to the heirs of salvation," who will be "equal to angels" by and by, although they are now a little inferior to them. I believe the latter, the evil angels, called in Scripture, *devils*, united under one head, (termed in Scripture *Satan;* emphatically, the *Enemy*, the *Adversary*, both of God and man,) either range the upper regions, whence they are called "Princes of the power of the air;" or like him, "walk about the earth as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour."

7. But I know by Faith, that above all these, is the Lord, Jehovah; He that is, that was, and that is to come, that is God from everlasting, and world without end: He that filleth heaven and earth: He that is infinite in power, in justice, in mercy, and holiness: He that created all things, visible and invisible, by the breath of his mouth, and still upholds them all, preserves them in being, "by the word of his power:" and that governs all things, that are in heaven above, in earth beneath, and under the earth. By Faith I know, "there are Three that bear record in heaven,

the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and that these Three are One:" that the Word, God the Son, "was made flesh," lived and died for our salvation, rose again, ascended into heaven, and now sitteth on the right hand of the Father. By Faith I know that the Holy Spirit is the giver of all spiritual life; of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; of holiness and happiness, by the restoration of that image of God, wherein we are created. Of all these things, Faith is the evidence, the sole evidence to the children of men.

8. And as the information which we receive from our senses, does not extend to the *invisible world*, so neither does it extend to (what is nearly related thereto) the *eternal world*. In spite of all the instruction which either the sight or any of the senses can afford,

"The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us,"
But clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it."

Sense does not let in one ray of light, to discover "the secrets of the illimitable deep." This, the *eternal world*, commences at death, the death of every individual person. The moment the breath of man goeth forth, he is an inhabitant of eternity. Just then, time vanishes away, "like as a dream when one awaketh." And here again, Faith supplies the place of sense, and gives us a view of things to come: at once it draws aside the veil which hangs between mortal and immortal beings. Faith discovers to us the souls of the righteous, immediately received by the holy angels, and carried by those ministering spirits into Abraham's bosom; into the delights of Paradise, the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines: where the spirit departed converses, not only with his former relations, friends, and fellow-soldiers, but with the saints of all nations and all ages: with the glorious dead of ancient days: with the noble army of Martyrs, the Apostles, the Prophets, the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yea, above all this, he shall be with Christ in a manner that he could not be while he remained in the body.

9. Faith discovers, likewise, the souls of unholy men; seized the moment they depart from the quivering lips, by those ministers of vengeance, the evil angels, and dragged away to their own place. It is true, this is not the nethermost hell: they are not to be tormented there "before the time;" before the end of the world, when every one will receive his just recompence of reward. Till then they will probably be employed by their bad master, in advancing his infernal kingdom, and in doing all the mischief that lies in their power, to the poor, feeble children of men. But still, wherever they seek rest, they will find none. They carry with them their own hell, in the worm that never dieth; in a consciousness of guilt, and of the wrath of God, which continually drinks up their spirits; in diabolical, infernal tempers, which are essential misery; and in what they cannot shake off, no, not for an hour, any more than they can shake off their own being, that "fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which will devour God's adversaries."

10. Moreover, Faith opens another scene in the eternal world, namely, the coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven, to "judge both the quick and the dead." It enables us to see the "great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them." We see "the books opened, and the dead judged, according to the things that are written in the books." We see the earth and sea giving up their dead, and hell (that is, the invisible world) giving up the dead that were therein; and every one judged according to his works.

11. By Faith we are also shewn the immediate consequences of the General Judgment. We see the execution of that happy sentence pronounced upon those on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!" After which the holy angels tune their harps and sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in!" And then shall they drink of the rivers of pleasure that are

at God's right hand for evermore. We see, likewise, the execution of that dreadful sentence, pronounced upon those on the left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." And then shall the ministers of divine vengeance plunge them into "the lake of fire burning with brimstone, where they have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

12. But beside the *invisible* and the *eternal world*, which are not seen, which are discoverable only by Faith, there is a whole system of things which are not seen, which cannot be discerned by any of our outward senses. I mean, the *spiritual world*, understanding thereby the kingdom of God in the soul of man. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard this; neither could it enter into the heart of man to conceive the things of" this interior kingdom, unless God revealed them by his Spirit. The Holy Spirit prepares us for his inward kingdom, by removing the veil from our heart, and enabling us to know ourselves as we are known of him: by "convincing us of sin," of our evil nature, our evil tempers, and our evil words and actions; all of which cannot but partake of the corruption of the heart from which they spring. He then convinces us of the desert of our sins, so that our mouth is stopped, and we are constrained to plead guilty before God. At the same time, we "receive the spirit of bondage unto fear;" fear of the wrath of God, fear of the punishment which we have deserved, and, above all, fear of death, lest it should consign us over to eternal death. Souls that are thus convinced, feel they are so fast in prison, that they cannot get forth. They feel themselves at once altogether sinful, altogether guilty, and altogether helpless. But all this conviction implies a species of Faith, being "an evidence of things not seen." Nor indeed possible to be seen or known, till God reveals them unto us.

13. But still let it be carefully observed, (for it is a point of no small importance,) that this Faith is only the Faith of a servant, and not the Faith of a son. Because this is a point which many do not clearly understand, I will endea-

vour to make it a little plainer. The Faith of a servant implies a divine evidence of the *invisible* and the *eternal world:* yea, and an evidence of the *spiritual world*, so far as it can exist without living experience. Whoever has attained this, the Faith of a servant, "feareth God, and escheweth evil:" or, as it is expressed by St. Peter, "feareth God, and worketh righteousness." In consequence of which he is, in a degree, as the Apostle observes, "accepted with him." Elsewhere he is described in those words, "He that feareth God, and keepeth his commandments." Even one who has only gone thus far in religion, who obeys God out of fear, is not in any wise to be despised, seeing "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Nevertheless he should be exhorted, not to stop there; not to rest till he attains the adoption of sons; till he obeys him out of love, which is the privilege of all the *children* of God.

14. Exhort him to press on by all possible means, till he passes "from faith to faith;" from the faith of a *servant* to the faith of a *son;* from the spirit of bondage unto fear, to the spirit of childlike love: he will then have "Christ revealed in his heart," enabling him to testify, "The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me:*" the proper voice of a child of God. He will then be "born of God," inwardly changed by the mighty power of God, from "an earthly, sensual, devilish mind, to the mind which was in Christ Jesus." He will experience what St. Paul means, by those remarkable words to the Galatians, "Ye are the sons of God by faith; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." "He that believeth," as a son, (as St. John observes,) "hath the witness in himself. The Spirit itself witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him."

15. But many doubts and fears may still remain, even in a child of God, while he is weak in faith, while he is in the

number of those whom St. Paul terms "babes in Christ." But when his faith is strengthened, when he receives Faith's abiding impression, realizing things to come; when he has received the abiding witness of the Spirit, doubts and fears vanish away. He then enjoys the *plerophory*, or "full assurance of faith," excluding all doubt and all "fear that hath torment." To those whom he styles *young* men, St. John says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." These, the Apostle observes in the other verse, had "the word of God abiding in them." It may not improbably mean, The pardoning word, the word which spake all their sins forgiven. In consequence of which they have the consciousness of the Divine favour, without any intermission.

16. To these more especially we may apply the exhortation of the Apostle Paul, "Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, (namely, repentance and faith,) let us go on unto perfection." But in what sense are we to *leave those principles?* Not absolutely; for we are to retain both one and the other, the knowledge of ourselves, and the knowledge of God, unto our lives end. But only comparatively; not fixing, as we did at first, our whole attention upon them, thinking and talking perpetually of nothing else, but either repentance or faith. But what is the perfection here spoken of? It is not only a deliverance from doubts and fears, but from sin, from all inward, as well as outward sin: from evil desires, and evil tempers, as well as from evil words and works. Yea, and it is not only a negative blessing, a deliverance from all evil dispositions, implied in that expression, "I will circumcise thy heart;" but a positive one likewise, even the planting all good dispositions in their place, clearly implied in that other expression, "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul."

17. These are they to whom the Apostle John gives the venerable title of *Fathers*, who "have known him that is from the beginning," the eternal Three-One God. One of

these expresses himself thus, "I bear about with me an experimental verity and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity." And those who are fathers in Christ, generally, though I believe, not always, enjoy the plerophory or "full assurance of hope:" having no more doubt of reigning with him in glory, than if they already saw him coming in the clouds of heaven. But this does not prevent their continually increasing in the knowledge and love of God, while they "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." They pray in particular, that they may never cease to watch, to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, to fight the good fight of faith, and against the world, the devil, and their own manifold infirmities; till they are "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge;" yea, to be "filled with all the fulness of God."

YARM, *June* 11, 1788.

SERMON CXV.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WALKING BY SIGHT, AND WALKING BY FAITH.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 7.

"*We walk by Faith, and not by Sight.*"

1. HOW short is this description of real Christians! And yet how exceedingly full! It comprehends, it sums up the whole experience of those that are truly such, from the time they are born of God, till they remove into Abraham's bosom. For, who are the *we* that are here spoken of? All that are true Christian Believers. I say, *Christian*, not *Jewish believers*. All that are not only *servants*, but *children* of God. All that have "the Spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts, Abba, Father." All that have "the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, that they are the sons of God."

2. All these, and these alone can say, "We walk by faith, and not by sight." But before we can possibly "walk by faith," we must *live* by faith, and not by sight. And to all real Christians, our Lord saith, "Because I live, ye live also:" ye live a life which the world, whether learned or unlearned, "know not of." "You that," like the world, "were dead in trespasses and sins, hath he quickened," and made alive; given you new senses, spiritual senses: "Senses exercised to discern *spiritual* good and evil."

3. In order thoroughly to understand this important

truth, it may be proper to consider the whole matter. All the children of men that are not born of God, *walk by sight*, having no higher principle. By *sight*, that is, by *sense;* a part being put for the whole; the sight for all the senses: the rather, because it is more noble and more extensive than any, or all the rest. There are but few objects which we can discern by the three inferior senses of taste, smell, and feeling: and none of these can take any cognizance of its object, unless it be brought into a direct contact with it. Hearing, it is true, has a large sphere of action, and gives us some knowledge of things that are distant. But how small is that distance, suppose it were fifty or a hundred miles, compared to that between the earth and the sun! And what is even this, in comparison of the distance of the sun, and moon, and the fixed stars! Yet the sight continually takes knowledge of objects even at this amazing distance.

4. By sight, we take knowledge of the visible world, from the surface of the earth, to the region of the fixed stars. But what is the world visible to us, but "a speck of creation," compared to the whole universe? To the invisible world? That part of the creation which we cannot see at all, by reason of its distance? In the place of which, through the imperfection of our senses, we are presented with a universal blank.

5. But beside these innumerable objects, which we cannot see by reason of their distance, have we not sufficient ground to believe, that there are innumerable others of too delicate a nature to be discerned by any of our senses? Do not all men of unprejudiced reason allow the same thing, (the small number of Materialists, or Atheists, I cannot term *men of reason*,) that there is an invisible world, naturally such, as well as a visible one? But which of our senses is fine enough to take the least knowledge of this? We can no more perceive any part of this, by our sight, than by our feeling. Should we allow with the ancient Poet, that

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth,
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep;"

Should we allow, that the great Spirit, the Father of all, filleth both heaven and earth: yet is the finest of our senses utterly incapable of perceiving either Him or them.

6. All our external senses are evidently adapted to this external, visible world. They are designed to serve us only while we sojourn here, while we dwell in these houses of clay. They have nothing to do with the invisible world: they are not adapted to it. And they can take no more cognizance of the eternal, than of the invisible world: although we are as fully assured of the existence of this, as of any thing in the present world. We cannot think death puts a period to our being. The body indeed returns to dust: but the soul, being of a nobler nature, is not affected thereby. There is, therefore, an eternal world, of what kind soever it be. But how shall we attain the knowledge of this? What will teach us to draw aside the veil—"That hangs 'twixt mortal and immortal beings?" We all know,—"The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before us:" But we are constrained to add,—"Yet clouds, alas! and darkness rest upon it."

7. The most excellent of our senses, it is undeniably plain, can give us no assistance herein. And what can our boasted reason do? It is now universally allowed, *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu:* Nothing is in the understanding, which was not first perceived by some of the senses. Consequently the understanding having here nothing to work upon, can afford us no help at all. So that in spite of all the information we can gain, either from sense or reason, both the invisible and the eternal world are unknown to all that "walk by sight."

8. But is there no help? Must they remain in total darkness, concerning the invisible and the eternal world? We cannot affirm this: even the Heathens did not all remain in total darkness concerning them. Some few rays of light have, in all ages and nations, gleamed through the shade. Some light they derived from various fountains, touching the invisible world. "The heavens declared the glory of

God," though not to their outward sight:" "The firmament shewed," to the eyes of their understanding, the existence of their Maker. From the creation they inferred, the being of a Creator, powerful and wise, just and merciful. And hence they concluded, there must be an eternal world, a future state to commence after the present, wherein the Justice of God in punishing wicked men, and his Mercy in rewarding the righteous, will be openly and undeniably displayed, in the sight of all intelligent creatures.

9. We may likewise reasonably suppose, that some traces of knowledge, both with regard to the invisible and the eternal world, were delivered down from Noah and his children, both to their immediate and remote descendants. And however these were obscured or disguised by the addition of numberless fables, yet something of truth was still mingled with them, and these streaks of light prevented utter darkness. Add to this, that God never, in any age or nation, "left himself quite without a witness" in the hearts of men; but while he "gave them rain and fruitful seasons," imparted some imperfect knowledge of the Giver. "He is the true Light that" (still, in some degree,) "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

10. But all these lights put together availed no farther, than to produce a faint twilight. It gave them, even the most enlightened of them, no ελεγχος, no *demonstration*, no *demonstrative conviction*, either of the invisible, or of the eternal world. Our philosophical Poet justly terms Socrates, "The wisest of all mortal men;" that is, of all that were not favoured with Divine Revelation. Yet what evidence had he of another world, when he addressed those that had condemned him to death.—"And now, O ye Judges, ye are going to live, and I am going to die. Which of these is best, God knows; but I suppose, no man does." Alas! What a confession is this! Is this all the evidence that poor, dying Socrates had, either of an invisible, or an eternal world! And yet even this is preferable to the light of the great and good Emperor Adrian. Remember, ye modern heathens, and copy after his pathetic address to his

parting soul. (For fear I should puzzle you with Latin, I give it you in Prior's fine translation.)

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?
Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou hop'st and fear'st, thou know'st not what."

11. "Thou know'st not what!" True, there was no knowledge of what was to be hoped or feared after death, till "the Sun of Righteousness" arose, to dispel all their vain conjectures; and "brought life and immortality," that is, immortal life, "to light through the gospel." Then, (and not till then, unless in some rare instances,) God revealed, unveiled the invisible world. He then revealed himself to the children of men. "The Father revealed the Son" in their hearts: And the Son revealed the Father. He that of old time "commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined in their hearts, and enlightened them with the knowledge of the Glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ."

12. It is where sense can be of no farther use, that faith comes in to our help: it is the grand *desideratum:* it does what none of the senses can do; no, not with all the helps that art hath invented. All our instruments, however improved by the skill and labour of so many succeeding ages, do not enable us to make the least discovery of these unknown regions. They barely serve the occasions for which they were formed, in the present, visible world.

13. How different is the case, how vast the pre-eminence of them that "walk by faith!" God having "opened the eyes of their understanding," pours divine light into their souls, whereby they are enabled to "see Him that is invisible," to see God, and the things of God. What their "eyes had not seen, nor their ears heard, neither had it entered into their hearts to conceive," God from time to

time reveals to them, by the "Unction of the Holy One, which teacheth them of all things." Having "entered into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," by that "new and living way," and being joined unto "the general assembly and church of the first-born, and unto God the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant," each of these can say, "I live not, but Christ liveth in me; I now live that life, which is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is *my* life shall appear, then *I* shall likewise appear with him in glory."

14. They that *live* by faith, *walk by faith.* But what is implied in this? They regulate all their judgments concerning good and evil, not with reference to visible and temporal things, but to things invisible and eternal. They think visible things to be of small value, because they pass away like a dream; but, on the contrary, they account invisible things to be of high value, because they will never pass away. Whatever is invisible is eternal: the things that are not seen, do not perish. So the Apostle, "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Therefore, they that "Walk by faith," do not desire the things which are seen;" neither are these things the object of their pursuit. They "set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth." They seek only the things which are "where Jesus sitteth at the right-hand of God." Because they know "the things that are seen are temporal," passing away like a shadow, therefore they "look not at them," they desire them not, they account them as nothing; but "they look at the things which are not seen, that are eternal," that never pass away. By these they form their judgments of all things. They judge them to be good or evil, as they promote or hinder their welfare, not in time, but in eternity. They weigh whatever occurs, in this balance: What influence has it on my eternal state? They regulate all their tempers and passions, all their desires, joys, and fears, by this standard. They regulate all their thoughts and designs, all their words and actions, so as to prepare them for that invisible

and eternal world, to which they are shortly going. They do not *dwell*, but only *sojourn* here; not looking upon earth as their home, but only

"Travelling through Immanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high."

15. Brethren, are *you* of this number, who are now here before God? Do *you* see him that "is invisible." Have you faith? Living faith? The faith of a child? Can you say, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Do you "walk by faith?" Observe the question. I do not ask, Whether you curse, or swear, or profane the Sabbath, or live in any outward sin? I do not ask, Whether you do good, more or less? Or attend all the ordinances of God? But suppose you are blameless in all these respects, I ask, in the Name of God, By what standard do you judge of the value of things? By the visible or the invisible world? Bring the matter to an issue in a single instance. Which do you judge best, that your son should be a pious cobler, or a profane lord? Which appears to you most eligible, that your daughter should be a child of God, and walk on foot, or a child of the devil, and ride in a coach and six? When the question is, concerning marrying your daughter, If you consider her body more than her soul? Take knowledge of yourself! You are in the way to hell, and not to heaven; for you walk by sight, and not by faith. I do not ask, whether you live in any outward sin, or neglect,—but Do you *seek*, in the general tenor of your life, "the things that are above," or the things that are below? Do you "set your affection on things above," or on "things of the earth?" If, on the latter, you are as surely in the way of destruction, as a thief, or a common drunkard. My dear friends, let every man, every woman among you, deal honestly with yourselves. Ask your own heart, What am I seeking day by day? What am I desiring? What am I pursuing? Earth or heaven? The things that are seen, or the things that are not seen? What is your object, God

or the world? As the Lord liveth, if the world is your object, still all your religion is vain.

16. See, then, my dear brethren, that from this time, at least, ye choose the better part. Let your judgment of all the things round about you be according to the real value of things, with a reference to the invisible and eternal world. See that ye judge every thing fit to be pursued or shunned, according to the influence it will have on your eternal state. See that your affections, your desire, your joy, your hope, be set, not on transient objects, not on things that flee as a shadow, that pass away like a dream; but on those that are incapable of change, that are incorruptible and fade not away: those that remain the same, when heaven and earth "flee away, and there is no place found for them." See that in all you think, speak, or do, the eye of your soul be single, fixed on "him that is invisible, and the glories that shall be revealed." Then shall "your whole body be full of light." Your whole soul shall enjoy the light of God's countenance. And you shall continually see "the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

17. See, in particular, that all your "desire be unto him, and unto the remembrance of his Name." Beware of "foolish and hurtful desires:" such as arise from any visible or temporal thing. All these St. John warns us of, under that general term, "love of the world." It is not so much to the men of the world, as to the children of God, he gives that important direction, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Give no place to the "desire of the flesh," the gratification of the outward senses, whether of the taste, or any other. Give no place to "the desire of the eye," the internal sense, or imagination, by gratifying it, either by grand things, or beautiful, or uncommon. Give no place to "the pride of life," the desire of wealth, of pomp, or of the honour that cometh of men. St. John confirms this advice, by a consideration parallel to that observation which St. Paul had made to the Corinthi-

ans, "For the world and the fashion of it passeth away," is in the very act of passing, and will return no more. Therefore, desire none of these fleeting things; but that glory which "abideth for ever."

18. Observe well: this is Religion, and this alone: this alone is true Christian religion: not this or that opinion, or system of opinions, be they ever so true, ever so scriptural. It is true, this is commonly called faith. But those who suppose it to be religion, are given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie: and if they suppose it to be a sure passport to heaven, they are in the high road to hell. Observe well: *Religion* is not *harmlessness;* which a careful observer of mankind properly terms, *Hellish harmlessness,* as it sends thousands to the bottomless pit. It is not *Morality,* excellent as that is, when it is built on a right foundation, loving faith. But when otherwise, it is of no value in the sight of God. It is not *Formality,* the most exact observance of all the ordinances of God. This too, unless it be built on the right foundation, is no more pleasing to God, than "the cutting off a dog's neck." No: Religion is no less than living in eternity, and walking in eternity: and hereby walking in the love of God and man, in lowliness, meekness, and resignation. This, and this alone, is that "life which is hid with Christ in God." He alone, who experiences this, "dwells in God, and God in him." This alone is setting the crown upon Christ's head, and doing his "will on earth, as it is done in heaven."

19. It will easily be observed, that this is the very thing that the men of the world call *Enthusiasm.* A word just fit for their purpose, because no man can tell either the meaning, or even the derivation of it. If it has any determinate sense, it means a species of religious madness. Hence, when you speak your experience, they immediately cry out, "Much religion hath made thee mad." And all that you experience either of the invisible or of the eternal world, they suppose to be only the waking dreams of a heated imagination. It cannot be otherwise, when men born blind take upon them to reason concerning light and colours.

They will readily pronounce those to be insane, who affirm the existence of those things whereof they have no conception.

20. From all that has been said, it may be seen with the utmost clearness, what is the nature of that fashionable thing called *Dissipation*. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: it is the very quintessence of Atheism: it is artificial added to natural ungodliness. It is the art of forgetting God, of being altogether "without God in the world:" The art of excluding him, if not out of the world he has created, yet out of the minds of all his intelligent creatures. It is a total studied inattention to the whole invisible and eternal world: more especially to death, the gate of eternity, and to the important consequences of death, heaven and hell.

21. This is the real nature of *Dissipation*. And is it so harmless a thing, as it is usually thought? It is one of the choicest instruments of destroying immortal spirits, that was ever forged in the magazines of hell. It has been the means of plunging myriads of souls, that might have enjoyed the glory of God, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. It blots out all religion at one stroke, and levels man with the beasts that perish. All ye that fear God, flee from dissipation! Dread and abhor the very name of it. Labour to have God in all your thoughts! To have eternity ever in your eye! "Look" continually, "not at the things that are seen, but at things which are not seen." Let your hearts be fixed there, where "Christ sitteth at the right hand of God," that whensoever he calleth you, "an entrance may be ministered unto you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom."

SERMON CXVI.

ON THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE BEING.

MARK XII. 32.

"*There is* ONE *GOD.*"

1. AND as there is one God, so there is one religion, and one happiness for all men. God never intended there should be any more: and it is not possible there should. Indeed, in another sense, as the Apostle observes, "there are gods many, and lords many." All the heathen nations had their gods, and many; whole shoals of them. And generally, the more polished they were, the more gods they heaped up to themselves: but to us, to all that are favoured with the Christian Revelation, "there is but one God," who declares of himself, "Is there any God, beside me? There is none; I know not any."

2. But who can search out this God to perfection? None of the creatures that he has made. Only some of his attributes he hath been pleased to reveal to us in his word. Hence we learn, That God is an Eternal Being. "His goings forth are from everlasting," and will continue to everlasting. As he ever was, so he ever will be; as there was no beginning of his existence, so there will be no end. This is universally allowed to be contained in his very name, JEHOVAH: which the Apostle John accordingly renders, "He that was, and that is, and that is to come." Perhaps

it would be as proper to say, "He is from Everlasting to Everlasting."

3. Nearly allied to the Eternity of God, is his Omnipresence. As he exists through infinite duration, so he cannot but exist through infinite space: according to his own question, equivalent to the strongest assertion, "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." (Heaven and earth, in the Hebrew idiom, implying the whole Universe.) Which, therefore, according to his own declaration, is filled with his presence.

4. This One, Eternal, Omnipresent Being, is likewise All-perfect. He has from Eternity to Eternity, all the perfections and infinitely more, than it ever did, or ever can enter into the heart of man to conceive: yea, infinitely more than the angels in heaven can conceive: these perfections we usually term the Attributes of God.

5. And he is Omnipotent, as well as Omnipresent: there can be no more bounds to his power, than to his presence. He "hath a mighty arm: strong is his hand, and high is his right hand." He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, in the heavens, the earth, the sea, and in all deep places. With men, we know, many things are impossible: "but not with God; with him all things are possible." Whensoever he willeth, to do is present with him.

6. The Omniscience of God is a clear and necessary consequence of his Omnipresence. If he is present in every part of the Universe, he cannot but know whatever is, or is done there: according to the word of St. James, "Known unto God are all his works," and the works of every creature, "from the beginning" of the world: or rather, as the phrase literally implies, "from Eternity." His eyes are not only "over all the earth, beholding the evil and the good;" but likewise over the whole creation, yea, and the paths of uncreated night. Is there any difference between his knowledge and his wisdom? If there be, is not his knowledge the more general term, (at least according to our weak conceptions,) and his wisdom a particular branch of it? Namely, the knowing the end of every

thing that exists, and the means of applying it to that end?

7. Holiness is another of the attributes of the almighty, all-wise God. He is infinitely distant from every touch of evil. He "is light, and in him is no darkness at all." He is a God of unblemished justice and truth: but above all is his mercy. This we may easily learn from that beautiful passage in the thirty-third and fourth chapters of Exodus. "And Moses said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and proclaimed the name of the LORD, the LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."

8. This God is a Spirit; not having such a body, such parts, or passions, as men have. It was the opinion both of the ancient Jews and the ancient Christians, that He alone is a pure spirit, totally separate from all matter: whereas they supposed all other spirits, even the highest angels, even Cherubim and Seraphim, to dwell in material vehicles, though of an exceedingly light and subtile substance. At that point of duration, which the infinite wisdom of God saw to be most proper, for reasons which lie hid in the abyss of his own understanding, not to be fathomed by any finite mind, God "called into being all that is," created the heavens and the earth, together with all that they contain. "All things were created by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." He created man, in particular, after his own image, to be "a picture of his own eternity." When he had raised man from the dust of the earth, he breathed into him an immortal spirit. Hence he is peculiarly called "the Father of our spirits;" yea, "the Father of the spirits of all flesh."

9. He "made all things," as the wise man observes, "for himself, for his glory they were created." Not "as if he needed any thing:" seeing "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in himself. He is the proper

centre of spirits, for whom every created spirit was made. So true is that well known saying of the ancient Fathers, "Fecisti nos ad te: Et irrequietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te." "Thou hast made us for thyself: and our heart cannot rest, till it resteth in thee."

10. This observation gives us a clear answer to that question in the Assembly's Catechism, "For what end did God create man?" The answer is, "To glorify and enjoy him for ever." This is undoubtedly true: but is it quite clear, especially to men of ordinary capacities? Do the generality of common people understand that expression, "To glorify God?" No, no more than they understand Greek. And it is altogether above the capacity of children, to whom we can scarcely ever speak plainly enough. Now is not this the very principle that should be inculcated upon every human creature, "You are made to be happy in God," as soon as ever reason dawns? Should not every parent, as soon as a child begins to talk, or to run alone, say something of this kind, "See! what is that which shines so over your head? That we call the sun. See, how bright it is! Feel how it warms you! It makes the grass to spring, and every thing to grow. But God made the sun. The sun could not shine, nor warm, nor do any good without him." In this plain and familiar way a wise parent might, many times in a day, say something of God; particularly insisting "He made *you*; and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy." We cannot press this too soon. If you say, "Nay, but they cannot understand you when they are so young:" I answer, No, nor when they are fifty years old, unless God opens their understanding. And can he not do this at any age?

11. Indeed this should be pressed on every human creature, young and old, the more earnestly and diligently, because so exceedingly few, even of those that are called Christians, seem to know any thing about it. Many indeed think of being happy with God in heaven: but the being happy in God on earth never enters into their thoughts. The less so, because from the time they come into the world,

they are surrounded with idols. Such, in turns, are all "the things that are seen," (whereas God is not seen,) which all promise a happiness independent of God. Indeed it is true, that

"Upright both in heart and will,
We by our God were made:
But we turn'd from good to ill,
And o'er the creatures stray'd:
Multiplied our wand'ring thought
Which first was fix'd on God alone:
In ten thousand objects sought
The bliss we lost in one."

12. These idols, these rivals of God, are innumerable: but they may be nearly reduced to three parts. First, Objects of Sense; such as gratify one or more of our outward senses. These excite the first kind of "love of the world," which St. John terms, "the desire of the flesh." Secondly, Objects of the Imagination; things that gratify our fancy, by their grandeur, beauty, or novelty. All these make us fair promises of happiness, and thereby prevent our seeking it in God. This the Apostle terms, "the desire of the eyes:" whereby, chiefly, the imagination is gratified. They are, thirdly, what St. John calls, "the pride of life." He seems to mean, honour, wealth, and whatever directly tends to engender pride.

13. But suppose we were guarded against all these, are there not other idols, which we have need to be apprehensive of: and idols, therefore, the more dangerous, because we suspect no danger from them? For is there any danger to be feared from our friends and relations; from the mutual endearments of husbands and wives, or of parents and children? Ought we not to bear a very tender affection to them? Ought we not to love them only less than God? Yea, and is there not a tender affection due to those, whom God has made profitable to our souls? Are we not commanded to "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake?" All this is unquestionably true. And this very thing makes the difficulty.

Who is sufficient for this, to go far enough herein, and no farther? To love them enough, and not too much? Can we love a wife, a child, a friend, well enough, without loving the creature more than the Creator? Who is able to follow the caution which St. Paul gives to the Christians at Thessalonica, 1 Thes. iv. 5?

14. I wish that weighty passage (so strangely disguised in our translation) were duly considered, "Let every one of you know how to possess his vessel (his wife) in sanctification and honour." So as neither to dishonour God nor himself, nor to obstruct, but further holiness. St. Paul goes on, Μη εν παθει επιθυμιας, which we render, "Not in the lust of concupiscence:—(What is this?) It gives the English reader no conception at all. Παθος, means any *violent* or *impetuous affection*. Επιθυμια, is *desire*. By the two words the Apostle undoubtedly means, vehement and impetuous affections,—"as the Gentiles who know not God;" and so may naturally seek happiness in a creature.

15. If by the grace of God, we have avoided or forsaken all these idols, there is still one more dangerous than all the rest, and that is, Religion. It will easily be conceived, I mean false religion; that is, any religion which does not imply, "the giving the heart to God." Such is, first, a religion of opinions, or what is commonly called, orthodoxy. Into this snare fall thousands of those, who profess to hold "salvation by faith:" indeed all of those who by faith mean only a system of Arminian or Calvinian opinions. Such is, secondly, a religion of forms, of barely outward worship, how constantly soever performed; yea, though we attend the church service every day, and the Lord's supper every Sunday. Such is, thirdly, a religion of works, of seeking the favour of God, by doing good to men. Such is, lastly, a religion of Atheism; that is, every religion whereof God is not laid for the foundation. In a word, a religion wherein "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," is not the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last point.

16. True religion is right tempers towards God and man.

It is, in two words, gratitude and benevolence; gratitude to our Creator and supreme Benefactor, and benevolence to our fellow-creatures. In other words, it is the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.

17. It is in consequence of our knowing God loves us, that we love him, and love our neighbour as ourselves. Gratitude towards our Creator cannot but produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures. The love of Christ constrains us, not only to be harmless, to do no ill to our neighbour, but to be useful, to be "zealous of good works," "as we have time to do good unto all men," and to be patterns to all, of true genuine morality, of justice, mercy, and truth. This is religion, and this is happiness: the happiness for which we were made. This begins when we begin to know God, by the teaching of his own Spirit. As soon as the Father of spirits reveals his Son in our hearts, and the Son reveals his Father, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts: then, and not till then, we are happy. We are happy first, in the consciousness of his favour, which indeed is better than life itself: next, in the constant communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ: then in all the heavenly tempers, which he hath wrought in us by his Spirit: Again, in the testimony of his Spirit, that all our works please him; and, lastly, in the testimony of our own spirits, that "in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world." Standing fast in this liberty from sin and sorrow, wherewith Christ hath made them free, real Christians "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks." And their happiness still increases, as they "grow up into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

18. But how little is this religion experienced, or even thought on, in the Christian world! On the contrary, what reason have we to take up the lamentation of a dying saint, (Mr. Haliburton, of St. Andrews, in Scotland,) "O Sirs, I am afraid a kind of *rational* religion is more and more prevailing amongst us; a religion that has nothing of Christ belonging to it: nay, that has not only nothing of Christ,

but nothing of God in it!" And indeed how generally does this prevail, not only among professed infidels, but also among those who call themselves Christians, who profess to believe the Bible to be the Word of God? Thus our own countryman, Mr. Wollaston, in that elaborate work, "The Religion of Nature Delineated," presents us with a complete system of religion, without any thing of God about it; without being beholden, in any degree, to either the Jewish or Christian revelation. Thus Monsieur Burlomachi, of Geneva, in his curious treatise on "The Law of Nature," does not make any more use of the Bible than if he had never seen it. And thus the late Professor Hutcheson, of Glasgow, (a stranger writer than either of the other,) is so far from grounding virtue on either the fear or the love of God, that he quite shuts God out of the question; not scrupling to declare in express terms, That "a regard to God is *inconsistent with* virtue: inasmuch that if in doing a beneficent action, you expect God to reward it, the virtue of the action is lost: it is then not a virtuous, but a selfish action!"

19. Perhaps, indeed, there are not many who carry the matter to so great a length. But how great is the number of those who, allowing religion to consist of two branches, our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbour, entirely forget the first part, and put the second part for the whole, for the entire duty of man. Thus, almost all men of letters, both in England, France, Germany, yea, and all the civilized countries of Europe, extol *humanity* to the skies, as the very essence of religion. To this the great triumvirate, Rousseau, Voltaire, and David Hume, have contributed all their labours, sparing no pains to establish a religion, which should stand on its own foundation, independent on any revelation whatever, yea, not supposing even the Being of a God. So leaving him, if he have any Being, to himself, they have found out both a religion and a happiness, which have no relation at all to God, nor any dependence upon him.

20. It is no wonder that this religion should grow

fashionable, and spread far and wide in the world. But call it *humanity*, *virtue*, *morality*, or what you please, it is neither better nor worse than Atheism. Men hereby wilfully and designedly put asunder what God has joined, the duties of the first and the second table. It is separating the love of our neighbour from the love of God. It is a plausible way of thrusting God out of the world he has made. They can do the business without him, and so either drop him entirely, not considering him at all: or suppose, that since

"He gave things their beginning
And set this whirlegig a spinning,"

he has not concerned himself with these trifles, but let every thing take its own course.

21. On the contrary, we have the fullest evidence that the Eternal, Omnipresent, Almighty, All-wise Spirit, as he created all things, so he continually superintends whatever he has created. He governs all, not only to the bounds of creation, but through the utmost extent of space: and not only through the short time that is measured by the earth and sun, but from everlasting to everlasting. We know, that as all nature, so all religion, and all happiness, depend on him: and we know that whoever teaches to seek happiness without him, are monsters, and the pests of society.

22. But after all the vain attempts of learned or unlearned men, it will be found, as there is but one God, so there is but one happiness, and one religion. And both of these centre in God. Both by Scripture and by experience we know, that an unholy, and, therefore, an unhappy man, seeking rest but finding none, is sooner or later convinced, that sin is the ground of his misery, and cries out of the deep to him that is able to save, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." It is not long before he finds "redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." Then "the Father reveals his Son" in his heart, and he "calls Jesus, Lord, by the Holy Ghost." And then the love of God is "shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto him." From this principle springs real, disinterested benevolence to all mankind, making him humble, meek, gentle

to all men, easy to be intreated; to be convinced of what is right, and persuaded to what is good; inviolably patient, with a thankful acquiescence in every step of his adorable Providence. This is religion, even the whole mind, which was also in Christ Jesus. And has any man the insolence or the stupidity to deny, that this is happiness? Yea, that it

"Yields more of happiness below,
Than victors in a triumph know?"

23. There can be no doubt but from this love to God and man, a suitable conversation will follow. His "communication," that is, discourse, will "be always in grace, seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers." He will always "open his mouth with wisdom, and there will be in his tongue the law of kindness." Hence his affectionate words will "distill as the dew, and as the rain upon the tender herb." And men will know, "it is not he only that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in him." His actions will spring from the same source with his words, even from the abundance of a loving heart. And while all these aim at the glory of God, and tend to this one point, whatever he does, he may truly say,

"End of my every action thou,
In all things thee I see:
Accept my hallow'd labour now,
I do it as to thee!"

24. He to whom this character belongs, and he alone, is a Christian. To him the one, eternal, omnipresent, all perfect Spirit, is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Not his Creator only, but his Sustainer, his Preserver, his Governor: yea, his Father, his Saviour, Sanctifier, and Comforter. This God is his God, and his All, in time and in eternity. It is the benevolence springing from this root, which is pure and undefiled religion. But if it be built on any other foundation, as it is of no avail in the sight of God, so it brings no real, solid, permanent happiness to man, but leaves him still a poor, dry, indigent, and dissatisfied creature.

25. Let all, therefore, that desire to please God, condescend to be taught of God, and take care to walk in that

path, which God himself hath appointed. Beware of taking half of this religion for the whole, but take both parts of it together. And see that you begin where God himself begins: "Thou shalt have no other God before me." Is not this the first, our Lord himself being the judge, as well as the great Commandment? First, therefore, see that ye love God; next, your neighbour, every child of man. From this fountain let every temper, every affection, every passion flow. So shall that "mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Let all your thoughts, words, and actions, spring from this. So shall you "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

DUBLIN, *April* 9, 1789.

SERMON CXVII.

CAUSES OF THE INEFFICACY OF CHRISTIANITY.

JEREMIAH VIII. 22.

"*Is there no Balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there? Why then is not the Health of the Daughter of my People recovered?*"

1. THIS question, as here proposed by the Prophet, relates only to a particular people, the children of Israel. But I would here consider it in a general sense, with relation to all mankind. I would seriously inquire, Why has Christianity done so little good in the world? Is it not the balm, the outward means, which the Great Physician has given to men, to restore their spiritual health? Why then is it not restored? You say, Because of the deep and universal corruption of human nature. Most true. But here is the very difficulty. Was it not intended by our all-wise and almighty Creator, to be the remedy for that corruption? A universal remedy for a universal evil; but it has not answered this intention: it never did: it does not answer it at this day. The disease still remains in its full strength; wickedness of every kind; vice, inward and outward, in all its forms, still overspreads the face of the earth.

2. O Lord God, "righteous art thou! Yet let us plead with thee!" How is this? Hast thou forgotten the world thou hast made? Which thou hast created for thy own

glory? Canst thou despise the work of thy own hands, the purchase of thy Son's blood? Thou hast given medicine to heal our sickness; yet our sickness is not healed. Still darkness covers the earth, and thick darkness the people. Yea,

"Darkness, such as devils feel,
Issuing from the pit of hell."

3. What a mystery is this! That Christianity should have done so little good in the world! Can any account of this be given? Can any reasons be assigned for it? Does it not seem that one reason it has done so little good is this, because it is so little known? Certainly it can do no good, where it is not known. But it is not known at this day to the far greater part of the inhabitants of the earth. In the last century, our ingenious and laborious countryman, Mr. Brerewood, travelled over great part of the known world, on purpose to inquire, so far as was possible, what proportion the Christians bear to the Heathens and Mahometans. And according to his computation, (probably the most accurate which has yet been made,) I suppose mankind to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen parts of these are still open Heathens, having no more knowledge of Christianity than the beasts that perish. And we may add to these the numerous nations which have been discovered in the present century. Add to these such as profess the Mahometan Religion, and utterly scorn Christianity; and twenty-five parts out of thirty of mankind are not so much as nominally Christians. So then five parts of mankind out of six are totally ignorant of Christianity. It is, therefore, no wonder that five in six of mankind, perhaps nine in ten, have no advantage from it.

4. But why is it, that so little advantage is derived from it to the Christian world? Are Christians any better than other men? Are they better than Mahometans or Heathens? To say the truth, it is well if they are not worse: worse than either Mahometans or Heathens. In many respects they are abundantly worse, but then they are not properly Christians. The generality of these, though they bear the Christian name, do not know what Christianity is. They no more understand

it than they do Greek or Hebrew; therefore they can be no better for it. What do the Christians, so called, of the Eastern Church, dispersed throughout the Turkish dominions, know of genuine Christianity? Those of the Morea, of Circassia, Mengrelia, Georgia? Are they not the very dregs of mankind? And have we reason to think that those of the Southern Church, those inhabiting Abyssinia, have any more conception than they, of "worshipping God in spirit and in truth?" Look we nearer home. See the Northern Churches, those that are under the patriarch of Moscow. How exceedingly little do they know, either of outward or inward Christianity! How many thousands, yea, myriads of those poor savages, know nothing of Christianity, but the name. How little more do they know than the heathen Tartars on the one hand, or the heathen Chinese on the other!

5. But is not Christianity well known at least to all the inhabitants of the western world? A great part of which is eminently termed Christendom, or the land of Christians. Part of these are still members of the Church of Rome: part are termed Protestants. As to the former, Portuguese, Spaniards, Italians, French, Germans, what do the bulk of them know of scriptural Christianity? Having had frequent opportunity of conversing with many of these, both at home and abroad, I am bold to affirm, that they are in general totally ignorant, both as to the theory and practice of Christianity: so that they are *perishing* by thousands *for lack of knowledge*, for want of knowing the very first principles of Christianity.

6. "But surely this cannot be the case of the Protestants in France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland! Much less in Denmark and Sweden!" Indeed I hope it is not altogether. I am persuaded, there are among them many knowing Christians; but I fear we must not think that one in ten, if one in fifty be of this number: certainly not, if we may form a judgment of them, by those we find in Great Britain and Ireland. Let us see how matters stand at our own door. Do the people of England in general, (not the highest or the

lowest; for these usually know nothing of the matter; but people of the middle rank) understand Christianity? Do they conceive what it is? Can they give an intelligible account, either of the speculative or practical part of it? What know they of the very first principles of it? Of the natural and moral attributes of God? Of his particular Providence? Of the redemption of man? Of the offices of Christ? Of the operations of the Holy Ghost? Of justification? Of the new birth? Of inward and outward sanctification? Speak of any of these things to the first ten persons you are in company with; and will you not find nine out of the ten ignorant of the whole affair? And are not most of the inhabitants of the Scotch Highlands fully as ignorant as these? Yea, and the common people in Ireland? (I mean the Protestants, of whom alone we are now speaking:) Make a fair inquiry, not only in the country cabins, but in the cities of Cork, Waterford, Limerick; yea, in Dublin itself. How few know what Christianity means! How small a number will you find that have any conception of the analogy of faith! Of the connected chain of Scripture truths, and their relation to each other! Namely, The natural corruption of man; justification by faith; the new-birth; inward and outward holiness. It must be acknowledged by all competent judges, who converse freely with their neighbours in these kingdoms, that a vast majority of them know no more of these things, than they do of Hebrew or Arabic. And what good can Christianity do to these, who are so totally ignorant of it?

7. However, in some parts, both of England and Ireland, scriptural Christianity is well known; especially in London, Bristol, Dublin, and almost all the large and populous cities and towns of both kingdoms. In these, every branch of Christianity is openly and largely declared: and thousands upon thousands continually hear and receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." Why is it then, that even in these parts Christianity has had so little effect? Why are the generality of the people in all these places Heathens still? No better than the Heathens of Africa or America, either in their

tempers or in their lives? Now how is this to be accounted for? I conceive thus. It was a common saying among the Christians in the primitive Church, "The soul and the body make a man: the spirit and discipline make a Christian:" implying that none could be real Christians, without the help of Christian discipline. But if this be so, is it any wonder that we find so few Christians; for where is Christian discipline? In what part of England (to go no farther), is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now whatever doctrine is preached, where there is not discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers.

8. To bring the matter closer still. Is not scriptural Christianity preached and generally known among the people called Methodists? Impartial persons allow it is. And have they not Christian discipline too, in all the branches of it, regularly and constantly exercised? Let those who think any essential part of it is wanting, point it out, and it shall not be wanting long. Why then are not these altogether Christians, who have both Christian doctrine and Christian discipline? Why is not the spiritual health of the people called Methodists recovered? Why is not all that "mind in us which was in Christ Jesus?" Why have we not learned of him, our very first lesson, to be meek and lowly of heart? To say with him, in all circumstances of life, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt! I come not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Why are not we "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us? Dead to the desires of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life?" Why do not all of us live "the life that is hid with Christ in God?" O why do not *we*, that have all possible helps, "walk as Christ also walked?" Hath he not left us an example that we might tread in his steps? But do we regard either his example or precept? To instance only in one point. Who regards those solemn words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" Of the three rules which are laid down on this head, in the sermon on *The Mammon of Unrighteousness*, you may find many that observe the first rule, namely, "Gain all you

can." You may find a few that observe the second, "Save all you can:" but how many have you found that observe the third rule, "Give all you can?" Have you reason to believe, that five hundred of these are to be found among fifty thousand Methodists? And yet nothing can be more plain, than that all who observe the first two rules without the third, will be twofold more the children of hell than ever they were before.

9. O that God would enable me once more, before I go hence, and am no more seen, to lift up my voice like a trumpet to those who *gain* and *save* all they can, but do not *give* all they can. Ye are the men, some of the chief men, who continually grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and in a great measure stop his gracious influence from descending on our assemblies. Many of your brethren, beloved of God, have not food to eat; they have not raiment to put on; they have not a place where to lay their heads. And why are they thus distressed? Because *you* impiously, unjustly, and cruelly detain from them what your Master and theirs lodges in *your* hands, on purpose to supply *their* wants! See that poor member of Christ, pinched with hunger, shivering with cold, half naked! Mean time you have plenty of this world's goods, of meat, drink, and apparel. In the name of God, what are you doing? Do you neither fear God, nor regard man? Why do you not deal your bread to the hungry? And cover the naked with a garment? Have you laid out in your own costly apparel what would have answered both these intentions? Did God command you so to do? Does he commend you for so doing? Did he entrust you with *his* (not *your*) goods for this end? And does he now say, "Servant of God, well done?" You well know he does not. This idle expense has no approbation, either from God or your own conscience. But, you say, You can *afford* it!" O be ashamed to take such miserable nonsense into your mouths. Never more utter such stupid cant, such palpable absurdity! Can any steward *afford* to be an arrant knave? To waste his Lord's goods? Can any servant *afford* to lay out his

Master's money, any otherwise than his Master appoints him? So far from it, that whoever does this, ought to be excluded from a Christian Society.

10. "But is it possible to supply all the poor in our Society with the necessaries of life?" It *was* possible once to do this, in a larger Society than this. In the first Church at Jerusalem, there was not any among them that lacked, but distribution was made to every one, according as he had need." And we have full proof that it may be so still. It is so among the people called Quakers. Yea, and among the Moravians so called. And why should it not be so with *us?* "Because they are ten times richer than we." Perhaps fifty times. And yet we are able enough, if we be equally willing, to do this.

A gentleman (a Methodist) told me some years since, "I shall leave forty thousand pounds among my children." Now suppose he had left them but twenty thousand, and given the other twenty thousand to God and the poor, would God have said to him, "Thou fool?" And this would have set all the Society far above want.

11. But I will not talk of giving to God, or leaving half your fortune. You might think this to be too high a price for heaven. I will come to lower terms. Are there not a few among you that could give a hundred pounds, perhaps some that could give a thousand, and yet leave your children as much as would help them to work out *their* own salvation? With two thousand pounds, and not much less, we could supply the present wants of all our poor, and put them in a way of supplying their own wants for some time to come. Now suppose this could be done, are we clear before God, while it is not done? Is not the neglect of it one cause why so many are still sick and weak among you? And that both in soul and in body? That they still grieve the Holy Spirit, by preferring the fashions of the world to the commands of God? And, I many times doubt, whether we Preachers are not in some measure partakers of their sin. I am in doubt whether it is not a kind of partiality. I doubt, whether it is not a great sin to keep them in our

Society. May it not hurt their souls, by encouraging them to persevere, in walking contrary to the Bible? And may it not, in some measure, intercept the salutary influences of the blessed Spirit upon the whole Community?

12. I am distressed. I know not what to do. I see what I might have done once. I might have said peremptorily and expressly, "Here I am: I and my Bible. I will not, I dare not vary from this book, either in great things or small. I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle of what is contained therein. I am determined to be a Bible-Christian, not almost, but altogether. Who will meet me on this ground? Join me on this, or not at all." With regard to dress in particular I might have been as firm (and I now see it would have been far better) as either the people called Quakers, or the Moravian Brethren;—I might have said, "This is our manner of dress, which we know is both scriptural and rational. If you join with us, you are to dress as we do: but you need not join us unless you please." But, alas! the time is now past. And what I can do now, I cannot tell.

13. But to return to the main question. Why has Christianity done so little good, even among us? Among the Methodists? Among them that hear and receive the whole Christian doctrine, and that have Christian Discipline added thereto, in the most essential parts of it? Plainly, because we have forgot, or at least not duly attended to those solemn words of our Lord, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." It was the remark of a holy man, several years ago, "Never was there before a people in the Christian Church, who had so much of the power of God among them, with so little self-denial." Indeed the work of God does go on, and in a surprising manner, notwithstanding this capital defect; but it cannot go on in the same degree, as it otherwise would: neither can the word of God have its full effect, unless the hearers of it "deny themselves, and take up their cross daily."

14. It would be easy to shew, in how many respects the

Methodists, in general, are deplorably wanting in the practice of Christian self-denial: from which indeed they have been continually frighted by the silly outcries of the Antinomians. To instance only in one: While we were at Oxford, the rule of every Methodist, was (unless in case of sickness) to *fast* every Wednesday and Friday in the year, in imitation of the Primitive Church, for which we had the highest reverence. Now this practice of the Primitive Church is universally allowed. "Who does not know," says Epiphanius, an ancient writer, "that the fasts of the fourth and sixth days of the week (Wednesday and Friday) are observed by the Christians throughout the whole world? So they were by the Methodists for several years; by them all, without any exception. But afterwards, some in London carried this to excess, and fasted so as to impair their health. It was not long before others made this a pretence for not fasting at all. And I fear there are now thousands of Methodists so called, both in England and Ireland, who, following the same bad example, have entirely left off fasting: who are so far from fasting twice in the week, (as all the stricter Pharisees did,) that they do not fast twice in the month. Yea, are there not some of you who do not fast one day, from the beginning of the year to the end? But what excuse can there be for this? I do not say for those that call themselves members of the Church of England; but for any who profess to believe the Scripture to be the Word of God? Since, according to this, the man that never fasts, is no more in the way to heaven, than the man that never prays."

15. But can any one deny that the members of the Church of Scotland fast constantly? Particularly on their sacramental occasions. In some parishes they return only once a year, but in others, suppose in large cities, they occur twice, or even thrice a year. Now it is well known there is always a fast-day in the week preceding the administration of the Lord's Supper. But occasionally looking into a book of accounts in one of their vestries, I observed, "So much set down, *for the dinners* of the Ministers, on

the fast-day!" And I am informed there is the same article in them all. And is there any doubt, but the people fast just as their Ministers do? But what a farce is this! What a miserable burlesque upon a plain Christian duty! O that the General Assembly would have regard to the honour of their nation! Let them roll away from it this shameful reproach, by either enforcing the duty, or removing that article from their books. Let it never appear there any more! Let it vanish away for ever.

16. But why is self-denial in general so little practised at present among the Methodists? Why is so exceedingly little of it to be found even in the oldest and largest Societies? The more I observe and consider things, the more clearly it appears, what is the cause of this in London, in Bristol, in Birmingham, in Manchester, in Leeds, in Dublin, in Cork. The Methodists grow more and more self-indulgent, because they *grow rich*. Although many of them are still deplorably poor, ("Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!") yet many others, in the space of twenty, thirty, or forty years, are twenty, thirty, yea, a hundred times richer than they were when they first entered the Society. And it is an observation which admits of few exceptions, that nine in ten of these, decreased in grace, in the same proportion as they increased in wealth. Indeed, according to the natural tendency of riches, we cannot expect it to be otherwise.

17. But how astonishing a thing is this! How can we understand it? Does it not seem, (and yet this cannot be,) that Christianity, true, scriptural Christianity, has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself? For, wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality, which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches. And riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity. Now if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is inconsistent with itself, and of consequence cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people: since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation.

18. But is there no way to prevent this? To continue Christianity among a people? Allowing that diligence and frugality must produce riches, is there no mean to hinder riches from destroying the religion of those that possess them? I can see only one possible way: find out another who can? Do you gain all you can, and save all you can? Then you must in the nature of things grow rich. Then if you have any desire to escape the damnation of hell, *give* all you can; otherwise I can have no more hope of your salvation, than for that of Judas Iscariot.

19. I call God to record upon my soul, that I advise no more than I practise. I do, blessed be God, gain, and save, and give all I can. And so, I trust in God, I shall do, while the breath of God is in my nostrils. But what then? I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus, my Lord! Still

"I give up every plea beside,
Lord, I am damn'd! but thou hast died!"

DUBLIN, *July* 2, 1789.
38.

SERMON CXVIII.

ON KNOWING CHRIST AFTER THE FLESH.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 16.

"*Henceforth know we no Man after the Flesh: yea, though we did know* CHRIST *after the Flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*"

1. I HAVE long desired to see something clearly and intelligibly written on these words. This is doubtless a point of no small importance; it enters deeply into the nature of religion: and yet what treatise have we in the English language, which is written upon it? Possibly there may be such; but none of them has come to my notice, no, not so much as a single sermon.

2. This is here introduced by the Apostle in a very solemn manner. The words literally translated run thus: *He died for all, that they who live,*—all who live upon the earth, *might not henceforth,*—from the moment they knew him, *live unto themselves,*—seek their own honour, or profit, or pleasure, *but unto him,*—in righteousness and true holiness, ver. 15. *So that we from this time,*—that we know him by faith, *know no one,* either the rest of the Apostles, or you, or any other person, *after the flesh.* This uncommon expression, on which the whole doctrine depends, seems to mean, We regard no man, according to his former state, his

country, riches, power, or wisdom. We consider all men only in their spiritual state, and as they stand related to a better world. "Yea, if we have known even Christ after the flesh,"—which undoubtedly they had done, beholding and loving him as a man, with a natural affection, yet now we know him so no more. We no more know him as a man, by his shape, voice, or manner of conversation. We no more think of him as a man, or love him under that character.

3. The meaning then of this strongly figurative expression, appears to be no other than this. From the time that we are created anew in Christ Jesus, we do not think, or speak, or act, with regard to our blessed Lord, as a mere man. We do not now use any expression with relation to Christ, which may not be applied to him not only as he is man, but as he is "God over all, blessed for ever."

4. Perhaps, in order to place this in a clearer light, and at the same time guard against dangerous errors, it may be well to instance in some of those, that in the most plain and palpable manner *know Christ after the flesh.* We may rank among the first of these the Socinians, those who flatly "deny the Lord that bought them;" who not only do not allow him to be the supreme God, but deny him to be any God at all. I believe the most eminent of these that has appeared in England, at least in the present century, was a man of great learning and uncommon abilities, Dr. John Taylor, for many years Pastor at Norwich, afterwards President at the Academy at Warrington. Yet it cannot be denied, that he treats our Lord with great civility: he gives him very good words: he terms him "a very worthy personage," yea, "a man of consummate virtue."

5. Next to these are the Arians. But I would not be thought to place these in the same rank with the Socinians. There is a considerable difference between them. For, whereas the former deny Christ to be any God at all, the latter do not: they only deny him to be *the great God!* They willingly allow, nay, contend, that he is

a *little God.* But this is attended with a peculiar inconvenience. It totally destroys the Unity of the Godhead. For, if there be a great God, and a little God, there must be two Gods. But waving this, and keeping to the point before us. All who speak of Christ as inferior to the Father, though it be ever so little, do undoubtedly "know him after the flesh:" not as "the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person, as upholding," bearing up "all things," both in heaven and earth, "by the word of his power," the same powerful word, whereby of old time he called them all into being.

6. There are some of these, who have been bold to claim that great and good man, Dr. Watts, as one of their own opinion: and in order to prove him so, they have quoted that fine soliloquy, which is published in his posthumous works. Yet impartial men will not allow their claim, without stronger proof than has yet appeared. But if he is clear of this charge, he is not equally clear, of "knowing Christ after the flesh," in another sense. I was not aware of this, but read all his works with almost equal admiration, when a person of deep piety as well as judgment, was occasionally remarking, "That some of the Hymns printed in his *Horæ Lyricæ*, were, (as he phrased it,) too *amorous* and fitter to be addressed by a lover to his fellow-mortal, than by a sinner to the most High God." I doubt, whether there are not some other Writers, who, though they believe the Godhead of Christ, yet speak in the same unguarded manner.

7. Can we affirm, that the Hymns published by a late great man, (whose memory I love and esteem,) are free from this fault? Are they not full of expressions, which strongly savour of "knowing Christ after the flesh?" Yea, and in a more gross manner, than any thing which was ever before published in the English Tongue? What pity is it, that those coarse expressions should appear in many truly spiritual Hymns! How often in the midst of excellent verses, are lines inserted which disgrace those that precede

and follow? Why should not all the compositions in that book, be not only as poetical, but likewise as rational and as scriptural as many of them are acknowledged to be?

8. It was between fifty and sixty years ago, that by the gracious Providence of God, my brother and I, in our voyage to America, became acquainted with the (so called) Moravian Brethren. We quickly took knowledge what spirit they were of, six and twenty of them being in the same ship with us. We not only contracted much esteem, but a strong affection for them. Every day we conversed with them, and consulted them on all occasions. I translated many of their hymns for the use of our own congregations. Indeed, as I durst not implicitly follow any man, I did not take all that lay before me, but selected those which I judged to be most scriptural, and most suitable to sound experience. Yet I am not sure, that I have taken sufficient care, to pare off every improper word or expression, every one that may seem to border on a familiarity, which does not so well suit the mouth of a worm of the earth, when addressing himself to the God of heaven. I have indeed particularly endeavoured, in all the Hymns which are addressed to our blessed Lord, to avoid every *fondling* expression, and to speak as to the Most High God, to him that is, "in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal."

9. Some will probably think, that I have been over-scrupulous, with regard to one particular word, which I never use myself either in verse or prose, in praying or preaching, though it is very frequently used by modern Divines, both of the Romish and Reformed Churches. It is the word *dear*. Many of these frequently say, both in preaching, in prayer, and in giving thanks, "Dear Lord, or dear Saviour;" and my Brother used the same in many of his Hymns, even as long as he lived. But may I not ask, Is not this using too much familiarity with the great LORD of heaven and earth? Is there any scripture, any passage, either in the Old or New Testament which justi-

fies this manner of speaking? Does any of the inspired writers make use of it, even in the poetical Scriptures? Perhaps some would answer, "Yes, the apostle Paul uses it. He says *God's dear Son.*" I reply first, This does not reach the case: for the word which we render *dear*, is not here addressed *to Christ* at all, but only spoken *of him*. Therefore it is no precedent for, or justification of our addressing it *to him*. I reply, secondly, it is not the same word. Translated literally, the sentence runs, not *his dear Son*, but *the Son of his love*, or *his Beloved Son*. Therefore I still doubt, whether any of the inspired writers ever address the word either to the Father or the Son. Hence I cannot but advise all lovers of the Bible, if they use the expression at all, to use it very sparingly, seeing the Scripture affords neither command nor precedent for it. And surely "if any man speak," either in preaching or prayer, he should "speak as the Oracles of God."

10. Do we not frequently use this unscriptural expression concerning our blessed Lord, in private conversation also? And are we not then especially apt to speak of him as a mere man? Particularly when we are describing his sufferings, how easily do we slide into this? We do well to be cautious in this matter. Here is not room for indulging a warm imagination. I have sometimes almost scrupled singing, (even in the midst of my Brother's excellent Hymn,) "That dear, disfigured face," or that glowing expression, "Drop thy warm blood upon my heart," lest it should seem to imply the forgetting I am speaking of "the Man, that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Although he so "humbled himself as to take upon him the form of a servant, to be found in fashion as a man:" yea, though he "was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:" yet let it ever be remembered, that "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." And let our hearts still cry out, "Thou art exceeding glorious: thou art clothed with majesty and honour."

11. Perhaps some may be afraid, lest the refraining from

these warm expressions, or even gently checking them, should check the fervour of our devotion. It is very possible it may check, or even prevent some kind of fervour, which has passed for devotion. Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid, unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs, both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion, but to common decency.—But it will never check, much less prevent, true scriptural devotion. It will rather enliven the prayer that is properly addressed to Him, who, though he was very man, yet was very God. Who, though he was born of a woman to redeem man, yet was God from everlasting and world without end.

12. And let it not be thought, that the "knowing Christ after the flesh," the considering him as a mere man, and in consequence, using such language in public as well as private, as is suitable to those conceptions of him, is a thing of a purely indifferent nature, or however of no great moment. On the contrary, the using this improper familiarity with God our Creator, our Redeemer, our Governor, is naturally productive of very evil fruits. And that not only in those that speak, but also to those that hear them. It has a direct tendency to abate that tender reverence due to the Lord their Governor. It insensibly damps

"That speechless awe, which dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love."

It is impossible we should accustom ourselves to this odious and indecent familiarity with our Maker, while we preserve in our minds a lively sense of what is painted so strongly in those solemn lines,

"Dark with excessive bright, his skirts appear,
Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest Seraphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

13. Now, would not every sober Christian sincerely desire, constantly to experience such a love to his Redeemer, (seeing he is God as well as man,) as is mixed with angelic

fear? Is it not this very temper which good Dr. Watts so well expresses in those lines,

"Thy mercy never shall remove
From men of heart sincere:
Thou sav'st the souls, whose humble love
Is join'd with holy fear."

14. Not that I would recommend a cold, dead, formal prayer, out of which both love and desire, hope and fear, are excluded. Such seems to have been "the calm and undisturbed method of prayer," so strongly recommended by the late Bishop Hoadly, which occasioned for some years so violent a contest in the religious world. Is it not probable, that the well-meaning Bishop had met with some of the Mystics or Quietists, (such as Madam Guion, or the Archbishop of Cambray,) and that having no experience of these things, he patched together a theory of his own, as nearly resembling theirs as he could? But it is certain, nothing is farther from apathy than real, scriptural devotion. It excites, exercises, and gives full scope to all our nobler passions; and excludes none but those that are wild, irrational, and beneath the dignity of man.

15. But how then can we account for this, that so many holy men, men of truly elevated affections, not excepting pious Kempis himself, have so frequently used this manner of speaking, these *fondling* kind of expressions? Since we cannot doubt but they are truly pious men? It is allowed they were; but we do not allow that their judgment was equal to their piety. And hence it was that their really good affections a little exceeded the bounds of reason, and led them into a manner of speaking, not authorized by the Oracles of God. And surely these are the true standard, both of our affections and our language. But did ever any of the holy men of old speak thus, either in the Old or in the New Testament? Did Daniel, the *man greatly beloved*, ever thus express himself to God? Or did "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who doubtless loved his Master with the strongest affection, leave us an example of addressing him thus? Even when he was on the verge of glory? Even

then his concluding words were not *fond*, but solemn, *Come, Lord Jesus!*

16. The sum of all is, "We are to "honour the Son even as we honour the Father." We are to pay Him the same worship as we pay to the Father. We are to love him with all our heart and soul: and to consecrate all we have and are, all we think, speak, and do, to the THREE-ONE GOD, Father, Son, and Spirit, world without end!

Plymouth-Dock, August 15, 1789.

SERMON CXIX.

ON, A SINGLE EYE, &c.

MATTHEW VI. 22, 23.

"*If thine Eye be single, thy whole Body shall be full of Light: but if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body shall be full of Darkness. Therefore, if the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkness!*"

1. "SIMPLICITY and Purity," says a devout man, "are the two wings that lift the soul up to heaven: simplicity, which is in the intention, and purity, which is in the affections." The former of these, that great and good man Bishop Taylor, recommends with much earnestness, in the beginning of his excellent book, *Rules for Holy Living and Dying*. He sets out with insisting upon this, as the very first point in true religion, and warns us, that without this, all our endeavours after it, will be vain and ineffectual. The same truth, that strong and elegant writer, Mr. Law, earnestly presses in his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life:* A treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought. And who can censure any follower of Christ, for laying ever so great stress on this point, that considers the manner wherein our Master recommends it, in the words above recited?

2. Let us attentively consider this whole passage, as it may be literally translated. *The eye is the lamp of the body.* And what the eye is to the body, the intention is to the soul.

We may observe, with what exact propriety our Lord places simplicity of intention, between worldly desires, and worldly cares, either of which directly tend to destroy it. It follows, "If thine eye be single," singly fixed upon God, "thy whole body," that is, all thy soul, "shall be full of light," shall be filled with holiness and happiness. "But if thine eye be evil," not single, aiming at any other object, seeking any thing beneath the sun, "thy whole body shall be full of darkness: and if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" How remote, not only from all real knowledge, but from all real holiness and happiness!

3. Considering these things, we may well cry out, How great a thing it is to be a Christian, to be a real, inward, scriptural Christian, conformed in heart and life to the will of God! Who is sufficient for these things? None, unless he be born of God. I do not wonder, that one of the most sensible Deists should say, "I think the Bible is the finest book I ever read in my life, yet I have an insuperable objection to it. It is *too good.* It lays down such a plan of life, such a scheme of doctrine and practice, as is far too excellent for weak silly men to aim at, or attempt to copy after." All this is most true, upon any other than the scriptural hypothesis. But this being allowed, all the difficulty vanishes into air. For, if "all things are possible with God, then all things are possible to him that believeth."

4. But let us consider, First, the former part of our Lord's declaration, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light:" Secondly, the latter part, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness:" and, Thirdly, the dreadful state of those, whose eye is not single: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

I. 1. And first, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If thine eye be single, if God be in all thy thoughts, if thou art constantly aiming at him that is invisible: if it be thy intention in all things, small and great, in all thy conversation to please God, to do not thy

own will, but the will of him that sent thee into the world. If thou canst say, not to any creature, but to him that made thee for himself, "I view thee,—Lord and End of my desires;" then the promise will certainly take place, "Thy whole body shall be full of light:" thy whole soul shall be filled with the light of heaven, with the glory of the Lord resting upon thee. In all thy actions and conversation, thou shalt have not only the testimony of a good conscience toward God, but likewise of his Spirit bearing witness with thy spirit, that all thy ways are acceptable to him.

2. When thy whole soul is full of this light, thou wilt be able, (according to St. Paul's directions to the Thessalonians,) "to rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks." For who can be constantly sensible of the loving presence of God, without *rejoicing evermore?* Who can have the loving eye of his soul, perpetually fixed upon God, but he will "pray without ceasing?" For his "heart is unto God without a voice, and his silence speaketh unto him." Who can be sensible, that this loving Father is well pleased with all he does and suffers, but he will be constrained "in every thing to give thanks," knowing that all things "work together for good."

3. Thus shall "his whole body be full of light." The light of knowledge is doubtless one thing here intended, arising from "the Unction of the Holy One, which abideth with him, and teacheth him of all things," all the things which it is now necessary for him to know, in order to please God. Hereby he will have a clear knowledge of the divine will in every circumstance of life. Not without the means, but in the use of all those means, which God has furnished him with. And hence, walking in this light, he cannot but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will continually advance in all holiness, and in the whole image of God.

II. 1. Our Lord observes, Secondly, "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." If it be evil, that is, not single, (for the eye which is not single, is evil,) thy whole body shall be full of darkness. It is cer-

tain, there can be no medium between a single eye, and an evil eye. For, whenever we are not aiming at God, we are seeking happiness in some creature. And this, whatever that creature may be, is no less than idolatry. It is all one, whether we aim at the pleasures of sense, the pleasures of the imagination, the praise of men, or riches: all which St. John comprises under that general expression, "the love of the world." The eye is evil, if we aim at any of these, or indeed at any thing under the sun. So far as you aim at any of these, indeed, at any thing beneath God, your whole soul, and the whole course of your life will be full of darkness. Ignorance of yourselves, ignorance of your real interest, ignorance of your relation to God, will surround you with impenetrable clouds, with darkness that may be felt. And so long as the eye of your soul rests upon all or any of these, those will continue to surround your soul, and cover it with utter darkness.

2. With how many instances of this melancholy truth, that those whose eye is not single, are totally ignorant of the nature of true religion, are we surrounded on every side! How many even of good sort of people, of them whose lives are innocent, are as ignorant of themselves, of God, and of worshipping him in spirit and in truth, as either Mahometans or Heathens. And yet they are not any way defective in natural understanding. And some of them have improved their natural abilities by a liberal education, whereby they have laid in a considerable stock of deep and various learning. Yet how totally ignorant are they of God and of the things of God! How unacquainted both with the invisible and the eternal world! O why do they continue in this deplorable ignorance? It is the plain effect of this; their eye is not single. They do not aim at God: he is not in all their thoughts. They do not desire or think of heaven; therefore they sink deep as hell.

3. For this reason they are as far from holiness, as they are from valuable knowledge. It is because their eye is not single, that they are such strangers to vital religion. Let them be ever so accomplished in other respects, let them be ever so learned, ever so well versed, in every branch of

polite literature; yea, ever so courteous, so humane; yet if their eye be not singly fixed on God, they can know nothing of scriptural religion. They do not even know what Christian holiness means: what is the entrance of it, *the new birth*, with all the circumstances attending it: they know no more of this, than do the beasts of the field. Do they repent and believe the gospel? How much less are they renewed in the spirit of their minds, in the image of him that created them? As they have not the least experience of this, so they have not the least conception of it. Were you to name such a thing, you might expect to hear, "Much religion hath made thee mad:" so destitute are they, whatever accomplishments they have beside, of the only religion which avails with God.

4. And till their eye is single, they are as far remote from happiness as from holiness. They may now and then have agreeable dreams from

> "Wealth, honour, pleasure, or what else
> This short enduring world can give:"

But none of these can satisfy the appetite of an immortal soul. Nay, all of them together cannot give rest, which is the lowest ingredient of happiness, to a never-dying spirit, which God created for the enjoyment of himself. The hungry soul, like the busy bee, wanders from flower to flower; but it goes off from each, with an abortive hope, and a deluded expectation. Every creature cries, (some with a loud and others with a secret voice,) "Happiness is not in *me*." The height and the depth, proclaim to an attentive ear, "The Creator hath not implanted in me a capacity of giving happiness: therefore, with all thy skill and pains, thou canst not extract it from me." And indeed, the more pains any of the children of men take, to extract it from any earthly object, the greater will their chagrin be, the more secure their disappointment.

5. But although the vulgar herd of mankind can find no happiness; although it cannot be found in the empty plea-

sures of the world, may it not be found in learning, even by him that has not a single eye? Surely

"Content of spirit must from science flow;
For 'tis a god-like attribute to know."

By no means. On the contrary, it has been the observation of all ages, That the men who possessed the greatest learning, were the most dissatisfied of all men. This occasioned a person of eminent learning to declare, "A fool may find a kind of paradise upon earth, (although this is a grand mistake,) but a wise man can find none." These are the most discontented, the most impatient of men. Indeed, learning naturally effects this, *Knowledge*, as the Apostle observes, *puffeth up*. But where pride is, happiness is not, they are utterly inconsistent with each other. So much ground there is for that melancholy reflection, wherever true religion is not,

"Avails it then, O reason, to be wise?
To see this mournful sight with quicker eyes?
To know with more distinction to complain,
And have superior sense in feeling pain?"

III. 1. It remains to consider, in the third place, our Lord's important question, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The plain meaning is, If that principle which ought to give light to thy whole soul, as the eye does to the body; to direct thy understanding, passions, affections, tempers, all thy thoughts, words, and actions; if this principle itself be darkened, be set wrong, and put darkness for light: how great must that darkness be! how terrible its effects!

2. In order to see this in a stronger point of view, let us consider it in a few particular instances. Begin with one of no small importance. Here is a father choosing an employment for his son: if his eye be not single, if he do not singly aim at the glory of God in the salvation of his soul: if it be not his one consideration what calling is likely to secure him the highest place in heaven: not the largest share of earthly treasure, or the highest preferment in the church;

the light which is in him is manifestly darkness: and O how great is that darkness! The mistake which he is in, is not a little one, but inexpressibly great. What! do not you prefer his being a cobbler on earth, and a glorious saint in heaven, before his being a lord on earth, and a damned spirit in hell? If not, how great, unutterably great, is the darkness that covers your soul! What a fool, what a dolt, what a madman is he, how stupid beyond all expression, who judges a palace upon earth to be preferable to a throne in heaven! How unspeakably is his understanding darkened, who to gain for his child the honour that cometh of men, will entail upon him everlasting shame in the company of the devil and his angels!

3. I cannot dismiss this subject yet, as it is of the utmost importance. How great is the darkness of that execrable wretch, (I can give him no better title, be he rich or poor,) who will sell his own child to the devil! Who will barter her own eternal happiness, for any quantity of gold or silver! What a monster would any man be accounted, who devoured the flesh of his own offspring! And is not he as great a monster, who by his own act and deed, gives her to be devoured by that roaring lion? As he certainly does, (so far as is in his power,) who marries her to an ungodly man. "But he is rich: but he has ten thousand pounds!" What if it were a hundred thousand? The more the worse, the less probability will she have of escaping the damnation of hell. With what face wilt thou look upon her, when she tells thee in the realms below, "Thou hast plunged me into this place of torment. Hadst thou given me to a good man, however poor, I might have now been in Abraham's bosom. But, O! what have riches profited me! They have sunk both me and them into hell!"

4. Are any of you that are called Methodists, thus merciful to your children? Seeking to *marry them well*, (as the *cant* phrase is,) that is, to sell them to some purchaser that has much money, but little or no religion? Is then the light that is in *you* also become darkness? Are ye too, regarding God less than mammon? Are ye also without under-

standing? Have ye profited no more by all ye have heard? Man, woman, think what ye are about! Dare *you* also sell your child to the devil? You undoubtedly do this, (as far as in you lies,) when you marry a son or a daughter, to a child of the devil, though it be one that wallows in gold and silver. O take warning in time! Beware of the gilded bait! Death and hell are hid beneath. Prefer grace before gold and precious stones; glory in heaven, to riches on earth. If you do not, you are worse than the very Canaanites. They only made their children pass *through the fire* to Moloch. You make yours *pass into the fire* that never shall be quenched, and to stay in it for ever! O how great is the darkness that causes you, after you have done this, to "wipe your mouth and say you have done no evil!"

5. Let us consider another case, not far distant from this. Suppose a young man, having finished his studies at the University, is desirous to minister in holy things, and accordingly enters into orders. What is his intention in this? What is the end he proposes to himself? If his eye be single, his one design is to save his own soul, and them that hear him; to bring as many sinners as he possibly can, out of darkness into marvellous light. If, on the other hand, his eye be not single, if he aim at ease, honour, money, or preferment, the world may account him a wise man; but God says unto him, "Thou fool!" And while the light that is in him, is thus darkness, *how great is that darkness!* What folly is comparable to his folly! One peculiarly dedicated to the God of heaven, to *mind earthly things!* A worldly clergyman is a fool above fools, a madman above all madmen. Such vile, infamous wretches as these, are the real "ground of the contempt of the clergy." Indolent clergymen, pleasure-taking clergymen, money-loving clergymen, praise-loving clergymen, preferment-seeking clergymen; these are the wretches that cause the order in general to be contemned. These are the pests of the Christian world, the grand nuisance of mankind, a stink in the nostrils of God. Such as these were they, who made

St. Chrysostom to say, "Hell is paved with the souls of Christian priests."

6. Take another case: Suppose a young woman of an independent fortune, to be addressed at the same time by a man of wealth, without religion, and a man of religion, without wealth; in other words, by a rich child of the devil, or a poor child of God: What shall we say, if other circumstances being equal, she prefer the rich man to the good man? It is plain, her eye is not single; therefore her foolish heart is darkened, and how great is that darkness, which makes her judge gold and silver a greater recommendation than holiness! Which makes a child of the devil, with money, appear more amiable to her than a child of God without it! What words can sufficiently express the inexcusable folly of such a choice! What a laughing-stock, (unless she severely repent,) will she be to all the devils in hell, when her wealthy companion has dragged her down to his own place of torment!

7. Are there any of you that are present before God, who are concerned in any of these matters? Give me leave, with "great plainness of speech," to apply to your consciences" in the sight of God." You, whom God hath intrusted with sons or daughters, is your eye single in choosing partners for them? What qualifications do you seek in your sons and daughters-in-law? Religion or riches? Which is your first consideration? Are you not of the old Heathen's mind,

———*Quærenda pecunia primum,*
Virtus post nummos?

"Seek money first: Let virtue then be sought."

Bring the matter to a point. Which will you prefer? A rich Heathen, or a pious Christian? A child of the devil with an estate, or the child of God without it? A lord or gentleman, with the devil in his heart? (He does not hide it: his speech bewrayeth him,) or a tradesman, who, you have reason to believe, has Christ dwelling in his heart? O how great is that darkness which makes you prefer a child of the devil to a child of God! Which causes you to

prefer the poor trash of worldly wealth, which flies as a shadow, to the riches of eternal glory!

8. I call upon you more especially, who are called *Methodists*. In the sight of the great God, upwards of fifty years I have administered unto you, I have been your servant for Christ's sake. During this time I have given you many solemn warnings on this head. I now give you one more, perhaps the last. Dare any of you, in choosing your calling or situation, eye the things on earth, rather than the things above? In choosing a profession, or a companion for life for your child, do you look at earth or heaven? And can you deliberately prefer, either for yourself or your offspring, a child of the devil with money, to a child of God without it? Why the very heathens cry out,

O curvæ in terras animæ, et celestium inanes!

O souls bowed down to earth, strangers to heaven!

Repent, repent of your vile earthly-mindedness! Renounce the title of Christians, or prefer, both in your own case, and the case of your children, grace to money, and heaven to earth. For the time to come, at least, *let your eye be single*, that your *whole body may be full of light!*

BRISTOL, *Sept.* 25, 1789.

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SEP 25 1828